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OFFICE OF PETITIONS

MHG-05

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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicants: Greenwood et al.)
Serial No.: 09/834,101) Group Art Unit: 1744
Filed: April 12, 2001) Examiner: Chin, Randall E.
For: Detachably Interconnected)
Handle and Paint Brush)

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TC 1700

**PETITION TO THE DIRECTOR UNDER 37 CFR §1.181
REQUESTING WITHDRAWAL OF, OR RELIEF FROM,
EXAMINER'S SPECIES ELECTION REQUIREMENT**

Mail Stop Petition
Commissioner for Patents
P. O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Sir:

In *ex parte* prosecution of the above-identified application, the Examiner in charge of the application in an Office Action dated September 25, 2003 asserts a species election requirement and alleges that ten (10) "patentably distinct species of the claimed invention" are disclosed in this application and that no generic claim is asserted. The Examiner requires applicants to "elect a single disclosed species for prosecution on the merits" and then to "elect a single disclosed sub-species drawn to special packaging." The Examiner further asserts four "patentably distinct sub-species of the claimed invention" are disclosed in this application. Copies of the pending claims and drawings are attached as Exhibits A and B, respectively.

The Subject Matter

Basically, this is a classic situation where a utility patent application discloses an invention and illustrates the invention through various related embodiments, examples and uses.

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The invention relates to a paint brush with paint applicator portions that are engageable with and detachable from a handle portion. There are several embodiments taught for the handle portion and for the paint applicator portion. In addition:

- A handle portion can be associated successively with various different paint applicator portions.
- The handle portion and the paint applicator portions can each be associated with various features. For example, (a) the handle portion can be connected to a paint can opener (see claim 17), (b) the handle portion may have a soft plastic covering (see claim 18), (c) the handle portion may be comprised of two portions (see Fig. 18), and (d) the paint applicator portion can be provided with a bush skirt (see claim 27).
- The combination as well as the separated handle portion(s) and the paint applicator portion(s) can be specially packaged for storage, distribution, marketing and sale.
- The handle portion can be associated with tool heads other than a paint applicator.

Examiner's Position

Assuming arguendo that the Examiner's allegations are correct, then applicants would make an election of one alleged species for prosecution on the merits and would presumably present a claim considered generic by the Examiner. In addition, the applicants would make a

sub-election of a sub-species based on the first election, the sub-election limiting the disclosed packaging to one package embodiment.

From the Office Action, and based on previous practice of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office regarding a species election requirement such as here asserted, the best possible end result for applicants after further prosecution of this application under this elected species requirement would be (viewed *arguendo* in a most favorable light to applicants) an allowed application with possibly one claim covering the one elected alleged "species" and with possibly one "generic" claim possibly covering that one elected species. It is not clear either from the present record or from the Rules of Practice or from the Manual of Patent Examining Procedure what sort of claim coverage would be gained on the elected sub-species.

To cover the remaining alleged species, applicants would supposedly need to file a plurality of additional applications with the associated government fees, prosecution costs and time delays. To cover the remaining alleged sub-species, it is not clear what course the Examiner proposes for applicants to pursue.

Applicants' Position

Applicants (including the named inventors and their assignee, which is a small entity) object to this species election requirement and respectfully request that it be reconsidered and withdrawn as explained below.

Applicants similarly also object to this sub-species election requirement and respectfully request that it be reconsidered and withdrawn as explained below.

Applicants consider this species election requirement and this sub-species election requirement to be improper, unfair and an unacceptable burden in financial cost and time because if pursued:

(1) Applicants would most probably wind up with no adequate claim coverage for their invention.

(2) It imposes unreasonable and unacceptable financial and time burdens upon applicants.

(3) It inevitably will result in a loss of property rights to applicants to an extent sufficient to make their invention of little or no value and without commercial viability.

(4) It does not divide up applicants' invention into meaningful or useful portions.

To applicants, the value of their property rights in this invention depends upon obtaining meaningful, adequate and sufficient generic patent coverage on their invention. If applicants are denied such claim coverage on their invention, then the commercial value of their invention is greatly reduced either from the standpoint of sale or licensing of the property rights or from the standpoint of entering into manufacture and sale of embodiments of their invention. Without meaningful generic claim coverage on their invention, others could copy their idea and produce paint brush products that do not infringe.

Applicants, who are without unlimited funds, have been working out plans whereby one of them (Greenwood) would commercialize embodiment(s) of the invention here involved and/or possibly of the invention involved in their copending U.S. patent application identified as U.S. Serial No. 09/833,361 (undersigned attorney's docket no. MHG-04) also filed April 12, 2001.

Petition to the Director dated October 15, 2003

Reply to Office Action of September 25, 2003

That copending application involves one less co-inventor and presents a different structure of paint brush having a handle portion and detachable brush portions. Both applications have been carefully prepared.

Attention is respectfully drawn to the fact that applicants are concurrently filing a Petition to Make Special in the present patent application and also in the indicated copending patent application. These Petitions indicate that, if applicants can obtain meaningful and suitable claim coverage on these inventions, they will endeavor to engage in, and even expand the existing efforts relating to the manufacture and sale of embodiments of paint brush structures of the types involved in these applications. Without suitable generic coverage on their invention, applicants conclude that they cannot risk the capital and the effort to commercialize embodiments of these inventions.

The Application as Filed Presents Generic Claim Coverage for the Paint Brush

In fact, this application as filed includes generic claims. The invention and the illustrative embodiments disclosed in the application are covered by at least one generic claim (assuming arguendo that all relevant prior art is now known and of record).

Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner's allegations that the application discloses multiple species and that no generic claim is presented.

Applicants respectfully point out that claim 1 and claim 3, for example, clearly and fairly define and cover generically every paint brush disclosed in the application and comprised of a

"handle portion" and a "paint applicator portion" as set forth in the drawings of Figs. 1-50 and as explained in the accompanying descriptive portions of the specification.

From these figures, various different illustrated embodiments or species of the paint brush assembly, the handle portion, and the paint applicator portion, can be identified and counted. Thus, it can be concluded fairly that there may be more or less than 10 distinct species, and four distinct subspecies, of the invention shown in the drawings (as the Examiner alleges), depending upon how one chooses to count views shown in this application involving the brush assembly, the handle portion and the paint applicator portion.

Comparing, for example, the handle portions shown in the figures to the "handle portion" language of claim 1, lines 4-7, the paint applicator portions shown in the figures to the "paint applicator" language of claim 1, lines 8-14, and the interrelationship of the handle portion to the paint applicator as shown in the figures to the interrelationship language of claim 1, lines 15-22, it is seen that all handle portions, all paint applicator portions, and all interrelationships between handle portions and paint applicator portions are believed to be included in the claim 1 language. By such an analysis, claims 1 and 3 each believed to read on, and be generic to, all embodiments shown in the drawings.

Indeed, under examination standards of the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), if applicants did not show different exemplary embodiments of their generic invention, the generic nature of their invention in this art would perhaps be questionable or perhaps not readily apparent. Without the different exemplary embodiments, others would (presumptively) desire and attempt to claim inventions that are variously classifiable as

improvements, species, etc. over, and apart from, the generic invention of applicants which could detract from the scope and strength of applicants' generic invention.

In addition to generic claims covering the paint brush combination of handle portion and paint applicator portion, the application as filed included a generic "handle subassembly" claim (see claim 15) and a generic "brush subassembly" claim (see claim 20). Since the paint applicators shown in Figs. 49 and 50 do not involve a brush subassembly, those paint applicators are not embraced by claim 20. However, to cover, for example, the situation where the paint applicator is not a bristle pack, but, for example, a foam structure, claim 26 was included.

Figures 24-29 disclose paint brush assembly embodiments that are provided with a brush prop that is erectable and usable for purposes of supporting the paint applicator portion (when associated with a handle portion) in spaced relationship to an underlying surface. The generic claims are thought to read on paint brush assembly embodiments equipped with a brush prop.

Figs. 42-48 involve packaging for embodiments of the invention. Apart from the packaging, the paint applicator portions and the handle portions shown are thought to read on generic claims presented. Since sales of a handle portion with more than one paint applicator portion, and sales of a group of paint applicators apart from a handle portion are contemplated (as exemplified by Figures 47 and 48), claims addressed to a "plurality of paint applicator subassemblies" (see claim 24) were included.

Hence, applicants submit that the embodiments shown in the drawings are supported by generic claims in the application as filed.

Requirement for Sub-Species Election

Nothing in the Rules of Practice or the Manual of Patent Examining Procedure appears to relate to sub-species, to a requirement for sub-species designation and election, or to information relating to the manner in which sub-species would be handled in prosecution.

The Examiner cites 37 CFR 1.143 evidently as authority for his sub-species election requirement, but this seems to be an erroneous citation since 37 CFR §1.143 relates to reconsideration of a requirement for restriction, not election of species.

Since established prosecution practice does not involve sub-species election, and since the present requirement of sub-species election would appear, if followed, to result in a denial of generic claim coverage to packaging for the present invention, applicants respectfully request that this requirement be reconsidered and withdrawn.

Constructive Suggestion for Restriction

Applicants had hoped that the USPTO would consider that only a single invention is disclosed in the present application, that generic claim coverage could be obtained in the application, that modifications and features relating to their combination of handle portion and paint applicator portion could be achieved through further independent and dependent claims dependent upon generic claims, and that all subject matter could remain in a single application.

However, since separating the present application into a plurality of species is not satisfactory, from applicants' standpoint, if the USPTO should consider the present application to present too much subject matter for purposes of claiming in a single application, and for

Examiner searching and patent prosecution in a single application, then applicants, in a *bona fide* effort to be constructive, propose below an alternative approach which would still leave open the possibility of applicants obtaining meaningful and suitable generic claim coverage on their paint brush invention:

Possibly restrict (divide) the present application as follows:

(Group I) Claims directed to the paint brush comprising the dissociatable but associatable combination of a handle portion and a paint applicator portion, this Group including separate, independent claims to the handle portion and the paint applicator portion, and further including claims directed to modifications or features of the handle portion or the paint applicator portion.

(Group II) Claims directed to a special package for an individual paint applicator portion.

(Group III) Claims directed to a package containing a plurality (two or more) of paint applicator portions that is optionally in combination with a handle portion that may be separated from all paint applicator portions.

(Group IV) Claims directed to a paint brush or handle portion equipped with a brush prop mechanism.

Under this proposed restriction, applicants would elect Group I (above) if approved by the USPTO.

Conclusion

The Examiner's proposal to break up the disclosure of this application on the basis of alleged species and sub-species not only ignores the generic invention disclosed, but also operates to block applicants from obtaining generic claim protection.


Accordingly, applicants respectfully request that the present Petition urging reconsideration and withdrawal of the species election requirement presented in the Office Action of September 25, 2003 be granted. As an alternative, applicants propose a restriction into four Groups, as set forth above.

Applicants understand that under 37 CFR §181, no fee is due for the present Petition. However, if a fee is deemed due, please charge any fees to Deposit Account No. 15-0508.

Applicants note for the record that the above-noted Office Action mailed September 25, 2003 remains outstanding and that a shortened period for response of one month was set therein. However, applicants delay making a response to that Office Action in hopes that under the present Petition under Rule 181 that species election requirement will be withdrawn before the six month statutory period runs. If the present Petition cannot be made without an extension fee, then please charge any fee due to Deposit Account No. 15-1508.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: October 15, 2003

By 
Michael A. Hierl, Reg. No. 29,807

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20 North Wacker Drive, 36th Floor
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Serial No. 09/834,101

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Petition to the Director dated October 15, 2003

Reply to Office Action of September 25, 2003

(312) 580-1180

Attorneys for Applicants

CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that this paper and any attachments are being deposited with the U.S. Postal Service with sufficient postage as first class mail in an envelope addressed to Mail Stop Petition, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450 on October 15, 2003.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael A. Hierl', is written over a horizontal line.

Michael A. Hierl

Serial No. 09/834,101
Claims as Pending (10/15/03)

What is Claimed is:

1. A paint brush comprising a handle portion and a paint applicator portion detachably engaged with said handle portion,

said handle portion having a tool connector, said tool connector having peripheral wall portions that define an open terminal end and a pair of opposed windows;

said paint applicator portion having a paint applicator and a handle connector, said handle connector having an outwardly extending projection portion and a pair of outwardly extending opposed resilient arms, each said arm on a different opposite side region of said projection portion, and each said arm including a terminal portion;

said handle connector being slidably receivable within, and engageable with, said tool connector by insertion of said projection portion and said arms through said open terminal end, and, when so received, each said terminal portion being reversibly engaged with a different one of said windows while regions of said projection portion abut against inside regions of said peripheral wall portions.

2. The paint brush of claim 1 wherein

said handle connector additionally includes a pair of upstanding opposed pedestals, each one being located in laterally outwardly spaced relationship relative to a different one of said arms,

said tool connector additionally includes a pair of opposed, laterally outwardly extending portico portions, each one being located on a different opposed region of said peripheral wall portions,

the interrelationship between said pedestal portions and said portico portions being such that, when said handle connector is so received in said tool connector, a region of each said pedestal is received within a different one of said portico portions.

3. A paint brush comprising a handle portion and a paint applicator portion detachably engageable with said handle portion,

said handle portion having a tool connector at one end, said tool connector having peripheral wall portions that define an open terminal end and a pair of opposed windows;

said paint applicator portion having a paint applicator means, an applicator ferrule means mounted to said applicator means, and a handle connector connected to said applicator ferrule means, said handle connector having an outwardly extending projection portion and a pair of opposed resilient arms, each said arm extending adjacent to a different opposite side portion of said projection portion, and each said arm including an outward terminal portion;

said handle connector being slidably and nestably substantially receivable within, and engageable with, said tool connector by insertion of said projection portion and said arms through said open terminal end, and, when so received, each one of said terminal portions being reversibly engaged with a different one of said windows while regions of said projection portion abut against inside regions of said wall portions; and

said handle connector being disengageable from said tool connector when said terminal portions are inwardly depressed and thereby released from said windows.

4. The paint brush of claim 3 wherein

said handle connector additionally includes a pair of upstanding opposed pedestals, each one being located in laterally outwardly spaced relationship relative to a different one of said arms and in longitudinally spaced relationship relative to a different one of said windows,

said tool connector additionally includes a pair of opposed, laterally outwardly extending portico portions, each one being located on a different opposed outside wall region of said peripheral wall portions and adjacent to said open terminal end and in longitudinally spaced relationship relative to a different one of said windows,

the interrelationship between said pedestal portions and said portico portions being such that when said handle connector is so received in said tool connector, an upper region of each one of said pedestals is received within a different one of said portico portions.

5. The paint brush of claim 4 wherein said paint applicator portion comprises a bristle portion having a plurality of bristles mounted in a base portion, and said base portion is located at one end region of said applicator ferrule means, and said handle connector is located at an opposite end region of said applicator ferrule means.

6. A paint brush comprising in combination:

an elongated handle that has a forward end portion and an opposite rear end portion;

a tool connector associated with said forward end portion, said tool connector having respective opposite side wall and opposite end wall portions, said walls together defining an open forward end, said side wall portions defining therein a pair of opposed windows, and each said side wall portion having a laterally outwardly extending opposed portico portion;

a brush subcombination comprising a plurality of bristles, a pack base, and a bristle ferrule means having opposite end portions, said bristles having rear end portions connected to said pack base, and said pack base being associated with one said end portion;

a handle connector associated with said other end portion, said handle connector having an outwardly extending elongated projection structure with an enlarged terminating end region,

a pair outwardly extending, resilient, elongated, opposed arms, each said arm extending in adjacent spaced relationship to a different opposite side portion of said projection structure and having a terminal end portion; and

a pair of upstanding opposed pedestals, each said pedestal being located in laterally outwardly spaced adjacent relationship relative to a different one of said arms;

said handle connector being slidably, nestably and matingly receivable in said tool connector through said open forward end and, when so received, being detachably connectable with said tool connector with each said terminal end portion being matingly engaged with a different one of said windows, with said enlarged terminating end region abutting interior regions

of said wall portions, and with said pedestal portions each being adjacent to a different one of said portico portions; and

said handle connector being disengageable from said tool connector when said terminal end portions are depressed and released from said windows.

7. The paint brush of claim 6 wherein said tool connector is so received in and engaged with said handle connector.

8. The paint brush of claim 6 wherein said bristle ferrule means comprises a brush ferrule member and a secondary ferrule member, said brush ferrule member has opposite end portions and one end portion thereof is associated with said pack base, and said other end portion thereof is open, and said secondary ferrule also has opposite end portions, and one end portion thereof is connected to said handle connector and said other end portion thereof is open and slidably engageable with said open end of said brush ferrule member.

9. The paint brush of claim 6 wherein said tool connector and said handle connector are disengaged and said paint brush is located in a package.

10. A paint brush assembly comprising in combination:
a handle subassembly comprising a handle and a tool connector that is connected to an end portion of said handle subassembly;

said tool connector having wall portions that define an interior cavity, an open forward end, and pair of windows located in opposed relationship to each other and having a pair of opposed portico portions extending laterally outwardly from said wall portions; and

a brush subassembly comprising a bristle pack, a brush ferrule means, and a handle connector that is connected to said brush ferrule means;

said handle connector having a longitudinally outwardly extending projection, a pair of resilient arms, each arm longitudinally extending in adjacent spaced relationship along a portion of a different opposed side portion of said projection, each arm having a terminal portion, and a pair of upstanding pedestal portions, each pedestal portion positioned in laterally outwardly spaced adjacent relationship to a different one of said arms;

the interrelationship between said handle connector and said tool connector being such that said handle connector is slidably, nestably, and detachably connectable with said tool connector by inserting said handle connector substantially completely into tool connector through said open forward end so that

each said terminal portion matingly but reversibly engages and interlocks with a different one of said windows,

portions of said projection abut regions of said wall portions in said interior cavity, and each said pedestal portion is adjacent a different one of said portico portions.

11. The paint brush assembly of claim 10 wherein said brush subassembly is so connected with said handle subassembly.

12. The paint brush assembly of claim 10 wherein said bristle ferrule means comprises a brush ferrule member and a secondary ferrule member, said brush ferrule member has opposite end portions and one end portion thereof is associated with said pack base, and said other end portion thereof is open, and said secondary ferrule also has opposite end portions, and one end portion thereof is connected to said handle connector and said other end portion thereof is open but slidably engaged with said open end of said brush ferrule member.

13. The paint brush assembly of claim 10 wherein said brush subassembly and said handle subassembly are disconnected but are together in a common package.

14. The paint brush assembly of claim 10 wherein said brush ferrule means is associated with a brush prop.

15. A handle subassembly for association with a brush subassembly thereby to comprise a paint brush assembly, said handle subassembly comprising

a handle; and

a tool connector that is connected to an end portion of said handle;

said tool connector having side wall portions that define an interior cavity, an open forward end, and pair of windows located in opposed relationship to each other and having a pair of opposed portico portions extending laterally outwardly from said side wall portions.

16. The handle subassembly of claim 15 wherein said tool connector is connectable with a handle connector that is joined to a particular brush subassembly.

17. The handle subassembly of claim 15 wherein a rear end portion of said handle is associated with a paint can opener.

18. The handle subassembly of claim 15 wherein said handle includes a soft plastic covering.

19. The brush assembly that results when said tool connector of said handle subassembly of claim 15 is connected with the connectable handle connector of a particular brush subassembly.

20. A brush subassembly for a paint brush assembly that is comprised of said brush subassembly and a handle subassembly that is connectable with said brush subassembly, said brush subassembly comprising

a bristle pack, a brush ferrule means, and a handle connector that is connected to said brush ferrule means; and

said handle connector having a longitudinally outwardly extending projection, a pair of resilient arms, each arm longitudinally extending in spaced adjacent relationship along a different opposed side portion of said projection, each arm having a terminal portion, and a pair of

upstanding pedestal portions, each said pedestal portion being positioned in laterally outwardly spaced adjacent relationship to a different one of said arms.

21. The brush subassembly of claim 20 wherein said handle connector is connectable with the connectable tool connector of a particular handle subassembly.

22. The brush assembly that results when said handle connector of said brush subassembly of claim 20 is connected with the connectable tool connector of a particular handle subassembly.

23. The brush subassembly of claim 20 which is received in a jacket wherein said arms are each received in a different window defined in said jacket.

24. A plurality of paint applicator subassemblies for a paint brush assembly that is comprised of an interconnected handle subassembly and one of said paint applicator subassemblies, each of the paint applicator subassemblies of said plurality being individually interconnectable with, and disconnectable from, said handle subassembly, said handle subassembly incorporating a handle and a tool connector that has side portions that define an interior cavity, an open forward end, and pair of windows slots located in opposed relationship to each other, each of said brush subassemblies incorporating a paint applicator means and a handle connector that comprises a bottom plate portion, an upwardly extending projection connected to

said plate, and a pair of resilient arms, each arm being mounted to said plate and upwardly extending therefrom on a different opposite side of said projection, each arm including resilient means and a terminal portion, each said handle connector being slidably, nestably, and detachably connectable with tool connector by inserting said projection and said arms said open forward end,

whereby, at about the termination of said inserting,
each said terminal portion matingly but reversibly engages and interlocks with a different one of said windows, and also
portions of said projection abut portions of said interior cavity,
so that each said paint applicator subassembly is matingly and interlockingly connectable with said handle subassembly to comprise a paint applicator assembly.

25. The plurality of paint applicator subassemblies of claim 24 where, in each said paint applicator subassembly, said paint applicator means comprises a brush pack and an interconnected pack base.

26. The plurality of paint applicator subassemblies of claim 24 where, in at least one of said paint applicator subassemblies, said paint applicator means comprises a foam structure, and where, in at least one other of said paint applicator subassemblies, said paint applicator means comprises a brush pack and an interconnected pack base.

27. A brush skirt for a paint brush, said paint brush having a bristle pack that is generally cross-sectionally rectangular and that is associated with a brush ferrule that circumscribes a rearward portion of said bristle pack, said brush skirt comprising

an elongated sleeve having opposite broad side paired portions and opposite narrow side paired portions, respectively, and opposite forward and rearward respective end portions, said sleeve being configured so that said side paired portions slidably extend in generally adjacent relationship over exterior side portions of said brush ferrule,

each one of said broad side paired portions adjacent to said forward end portion being forwardly tapered thereby to define a mouth at said forward end portion whose width is somewhat less than the width of each of said brush skirt and of said bristle pack forwardly of said ferrule,

each one of said narrow side paired portions having medially defined therein a longitudinally extending slit that extends from said forward end portion to a location in longitudinally spaced relationship to said forward end portion, and being resilient and elastic between said location and said rearward end portion,

whereby, when said brush skirt is so slidably engaged with said brush ferrule,

said slit in each one of said narrow side portions is dilated when said mouth overlies a portion of said brush ferrule, and

said slit in each one of said narrow side portions is in a normally closed position when said mouth overlies said bristle pack.

28. The brush skirt of claim 27 wherein, at said each said location, said slit is enlarged locally, thereby to deter material disruption of each of said narrow side portions when said slit is so dilated.

29. The brush skirt of claim 27 wherein in a region between said location and said rearward end portion each said narrow side portion includes a pattern that can function to enhance retention of said brush skirt when said brush skirt is held manually between and thumb and finger.

30. The brush skirt of claim 27 which is unitarily molded of a resilient and somewhat elastic plastic.

31. The brush skirt of claim 27 wherein said forward end portion extends angularly relative to said narrow side paired portions, thereby to adapt said brush skirt for usage with a bristle pack and an associated brush ferrule wherein the opposite ends of said bristle pack and said brush ferrule extend angularly relative to said bristle pack narrow side paired portions.

32. The brush skirt of claim 27 wherein interior surface regions of each said broad side include portions adapted to increase friction between said regions and adjacent portions of a brush ferrule.

33. A tool assembly comprising a handle subassembly and a plurality of tool head subassemblies,

said handle subassembly having a proximal portion and a distal portion, said proximal portion defining a hand-graspable surface region, said distal portion defining a universal handle connector;

each said tool head subassembly having a forward tool-working portion and a rearward tool connector;

said universal handle connector being disconnectably connectable individually with each one of said tool connectors;

said universal handle connector having

- wall portions that define an interior cavity about an open forward end of said distal portion,

- a pair of windows defined in said wall portions and located in opposed relationship to each other, and

- a pair of opposed portico portions defined in said wall portions and that each extend laterally outwardly from said wall portions, and

each said tool connector having

- a generally transversely extending base portion,

- a projection generally longitudinally and outwardly extending from said base portion,

- a pair of resilient arms, each said arm longitudinally extending outwardly from said base portion in adjacent, spaced relationship to and along a portion of a different opposed side region of said projection, and each arm having a terminal portion, and

- a pair of pedestal portions, each said pedestal portion extending outwardly from said base portion in laterally adjacent, spaced adjacent relationship to a different one of said arms;

the interrelationship between said universal handle connector and each one of said tool connectors being such that said universal handle connector is slidably, nestably, and detachably connectable with each said tool connector by inserting said universal handle connector substantially completely into said tool connector through said open forward end so that

- each said terminal portion matingly but reversibly engages and interlocks with a different one of said windows,

- portions of said projection abut regions of said wall portions in said interior cavity, and

- each said pedestal portion is adjacent a different one of said portico portions.

34. The tool assembly of claim 33 wherein said handle subassembly defines a paint brush handle and wherein each of said tool head subassemblies defines a paint applicator.

35. The tool assembly of claim 34 wherein each said tool head subassembly defines a paint brush.

36. The tool assembly of claim 35 wherein each said paint brush is different from all other paint brushes comprising said plurality of tool head subassemblies.

37. The tool assembly of claim 33 wherein each said tool head subassembly additionally includes comprises skirt portions that outwardly extend in an opposed direction from said base portion and that are slidably engageable with a brush ferrule.

38. The tool assembly of claim 37 wherein said skirt portions are so slidably engaged with a brush ferrule and said brush ferrule is secured to said skirt portions by a bonding agent.

39. A paint applicator assembly comprising a paint applicator handle subassembly and a plurality of paint applicator subassemblies,

said paint applicator handle subassembly having a proximal portion and a distal portion, said proximal portion defining a hand-graspable surface region, and said distal portion defining a universal handle connector region;

each said paint applicator subassembly of said plurality of paint applicators having a forward portion and a rearward portion, said forward portion defining an applicator means for

paint application, and said rearward portion defining a paint applicator connector, and wherein each said paint applicator subassembly of said plurality of paint applicators has a substantially identical said paint applicator connector, but wherein each said applicator means for paint application is different from other said applicator means for paint application of said plurality of paint applicator subassemblies;

said universal handle connector region being disconnectably connectable individually with each one of said paint applicator connectors of said plurality of paint applicator subassemblies;

said universal handle connector region having—

- wall portions that define an interior cavity about an open forward end of said distal portion,

- a pair of windows defined in said wall portions and located in opposed relationship to each other, and

- a pair of opposed portico portions defined in said wall portions and that each extend laterally outwardly from said wall portions, and

each said paint applicator connector of said plurality of paint applicator subassemblies having—

- a generally transversely extending base portion,

- a projection generally longitudinally and outwardly extending from said base portion,

- a pair of resilient arms, each said arm longitudinally extending outwardly from said base portion in adjacent, spaced relationship to and along a portion of a different opposed side region of said projection, and each said arm having a terminal portion, and

- a pair of pedestal portions, each said pedestal portion extending outwardly from said base portion in laterally adjacent, spaced adjacent relationship to a different one of said arms;

the interrelationship between said universal handle connector region and each one of said paint applicator connectors of said plurality of paint applicator subassemblies being such that said universal handle connector region is slidably, nestably, and detachably connectable with each said paint applicator connectors by inserting said universal handle connector region substantially completely into one of said paint applicator connectors through said open forward end thereof so that

- each said terminal portion matingly but reversibly engages and interlocks with a different one of said windows,

- portions of said projection abut regions of said wall portions in said interior cavity, and

- each said pedestal portion is adjacent a different one of said portico portions.

40. The paint brush applicator assembly of claim 39 wherein said applicator means for paint application in each paint applicator subassembly of said plurality of paint applicator subassemblies defines a paint brush.

FIG. 1

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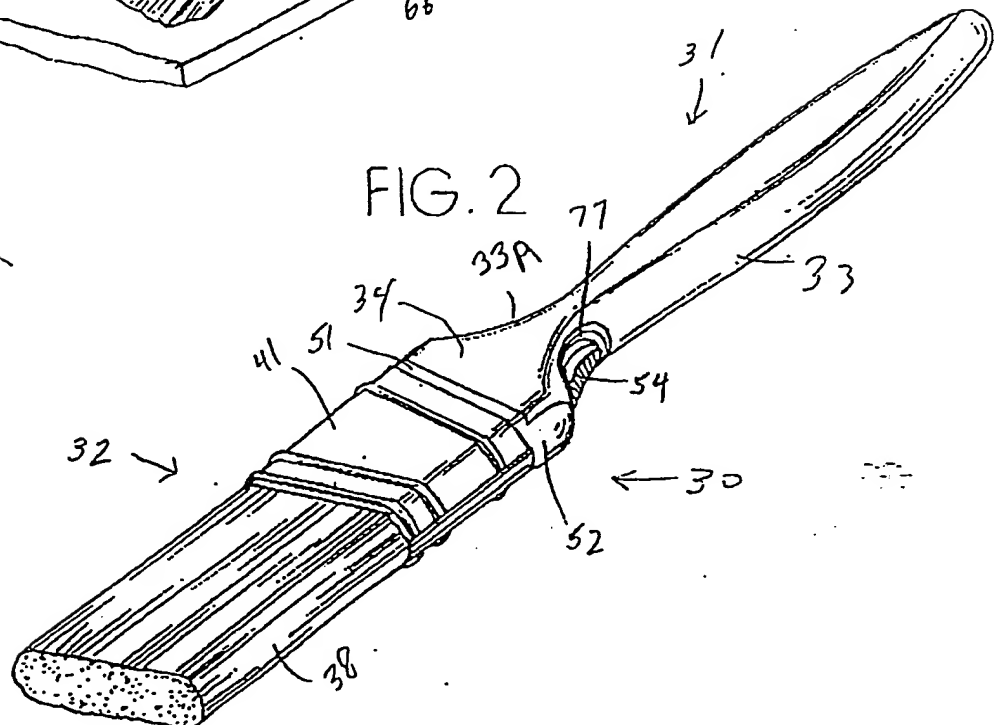
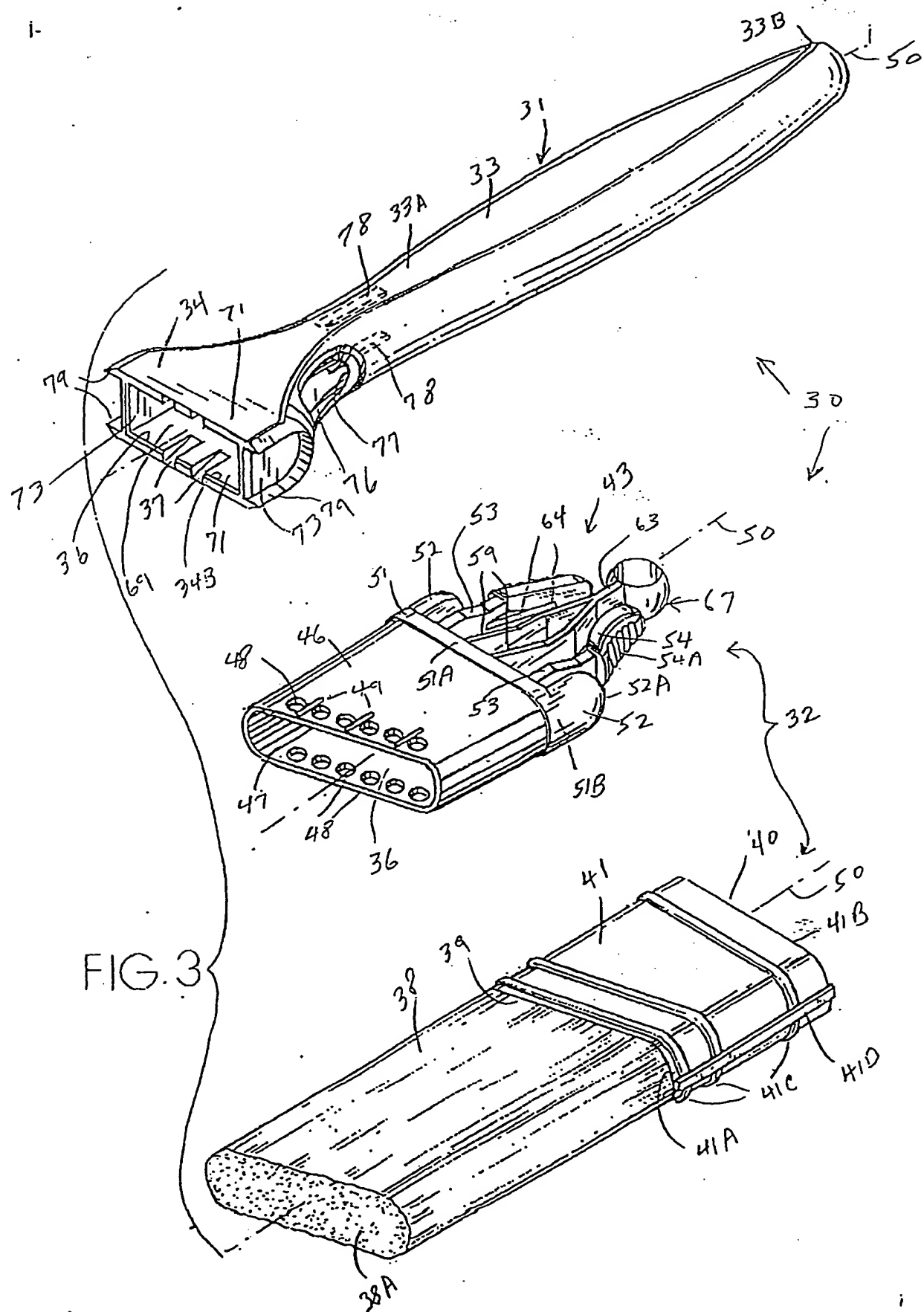


EXHIBIT B



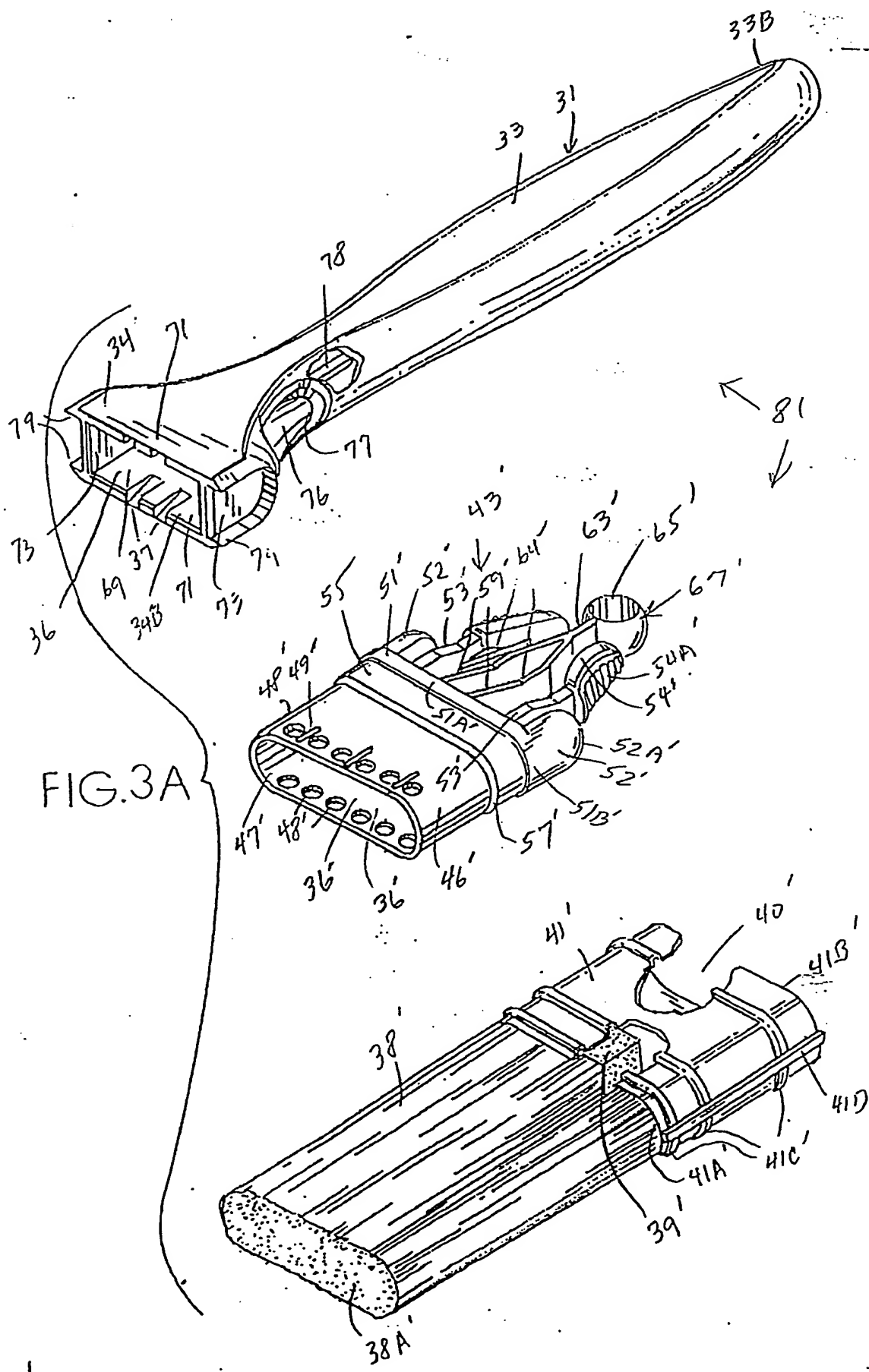


FIG. 4

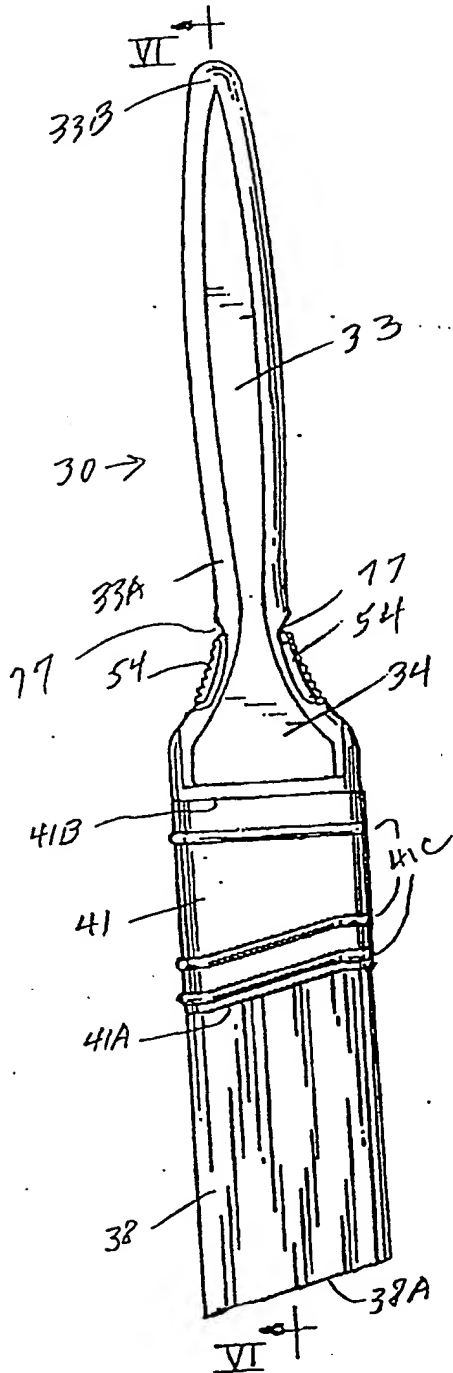


FIG. 5

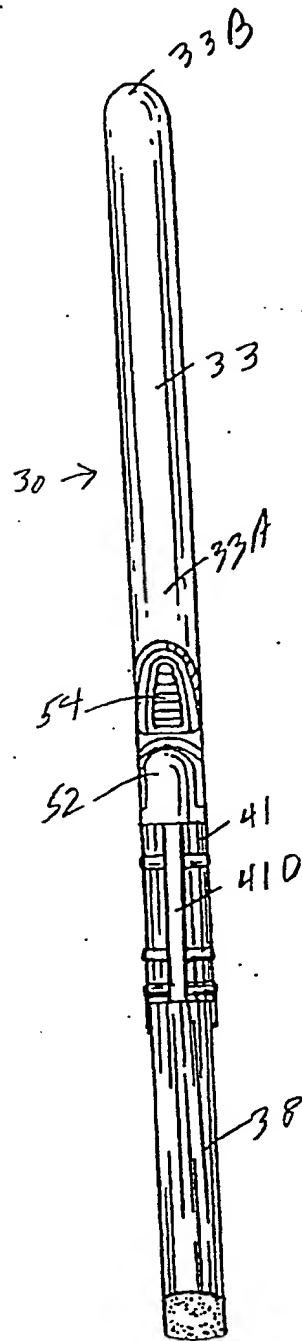
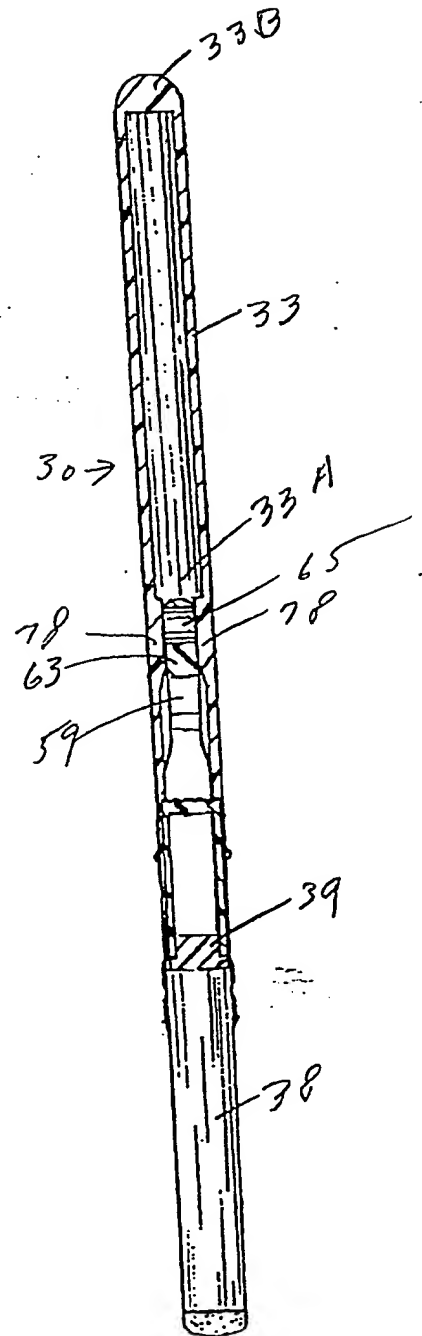
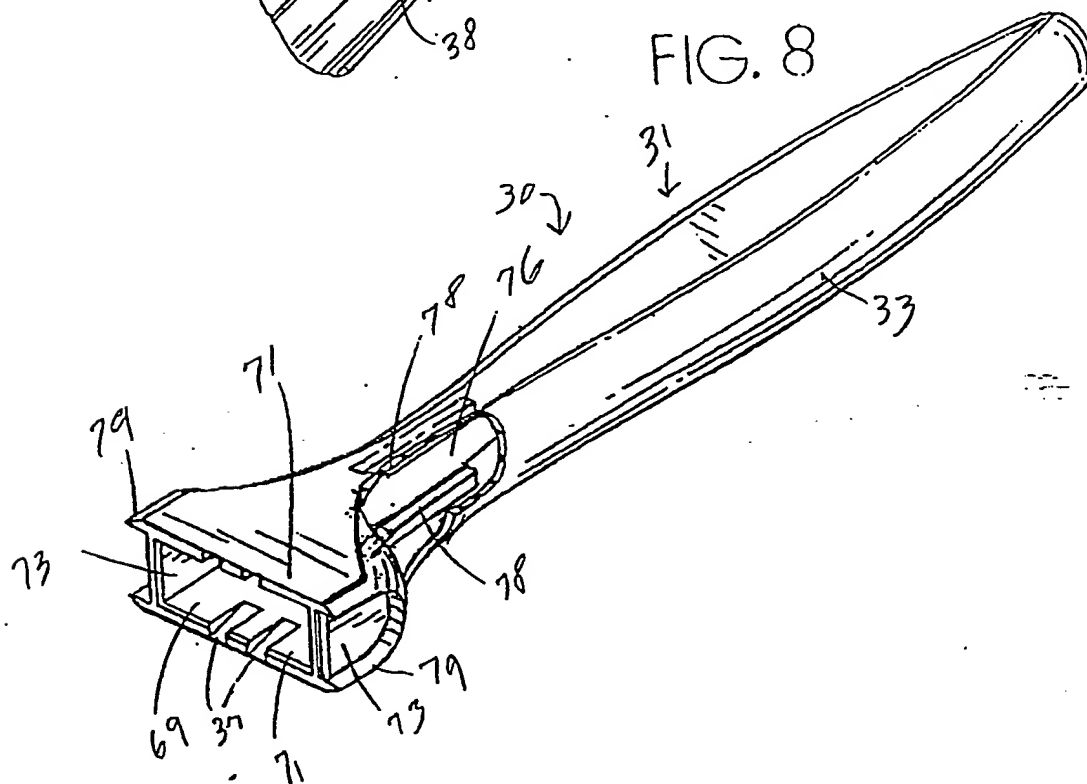
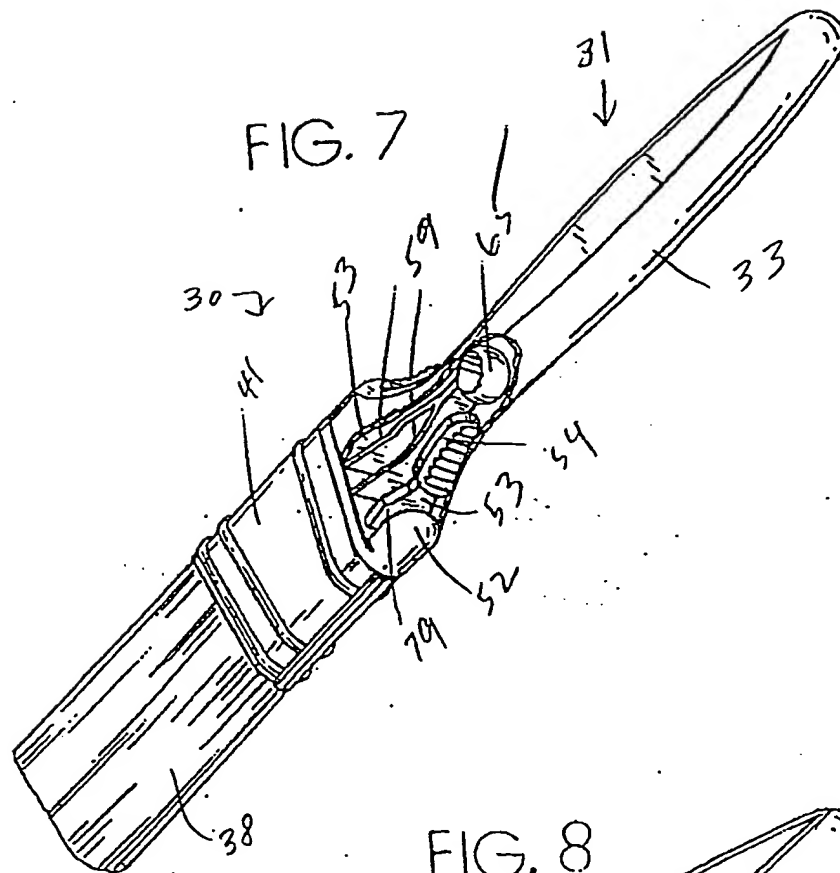
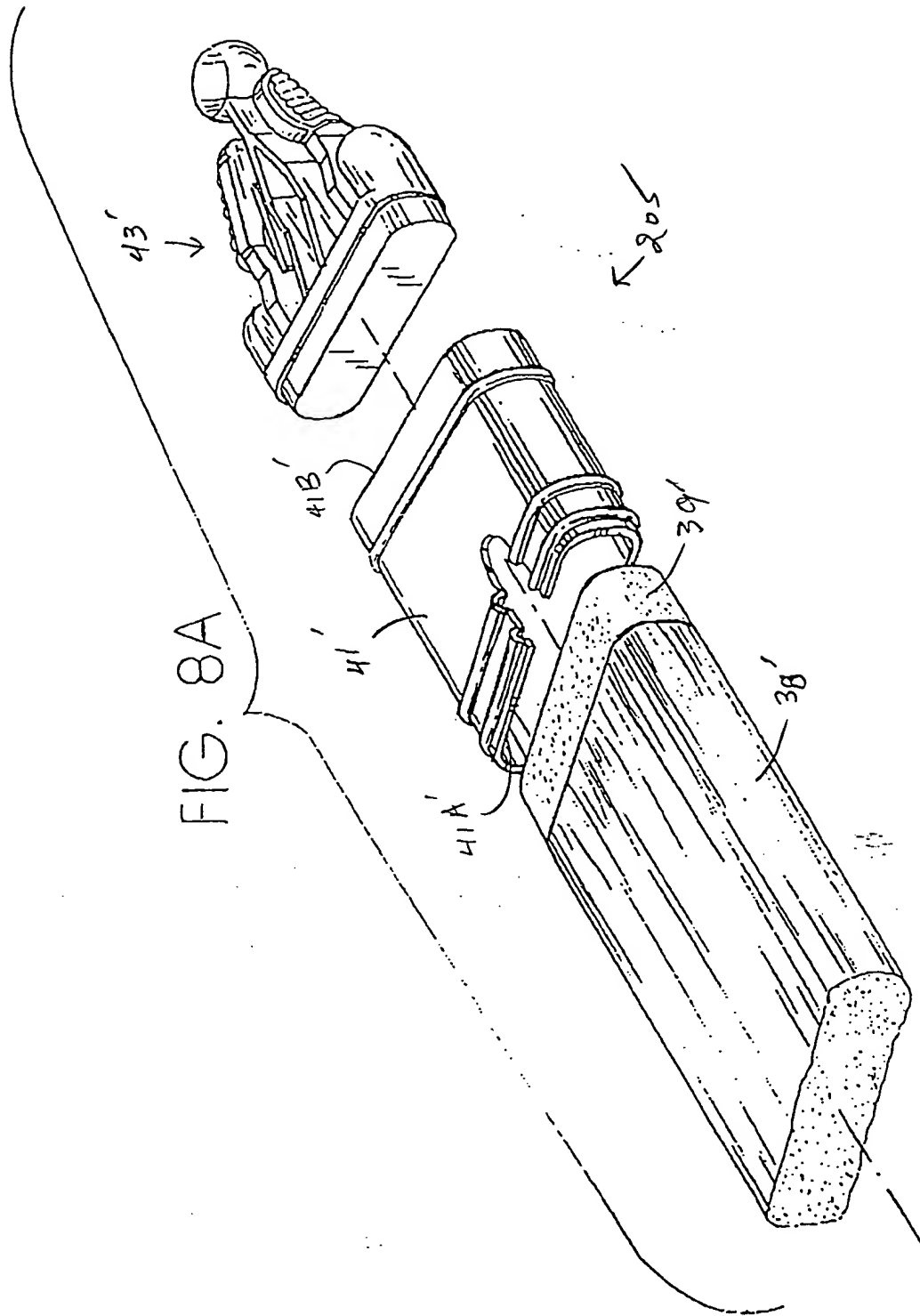


FIG. 6







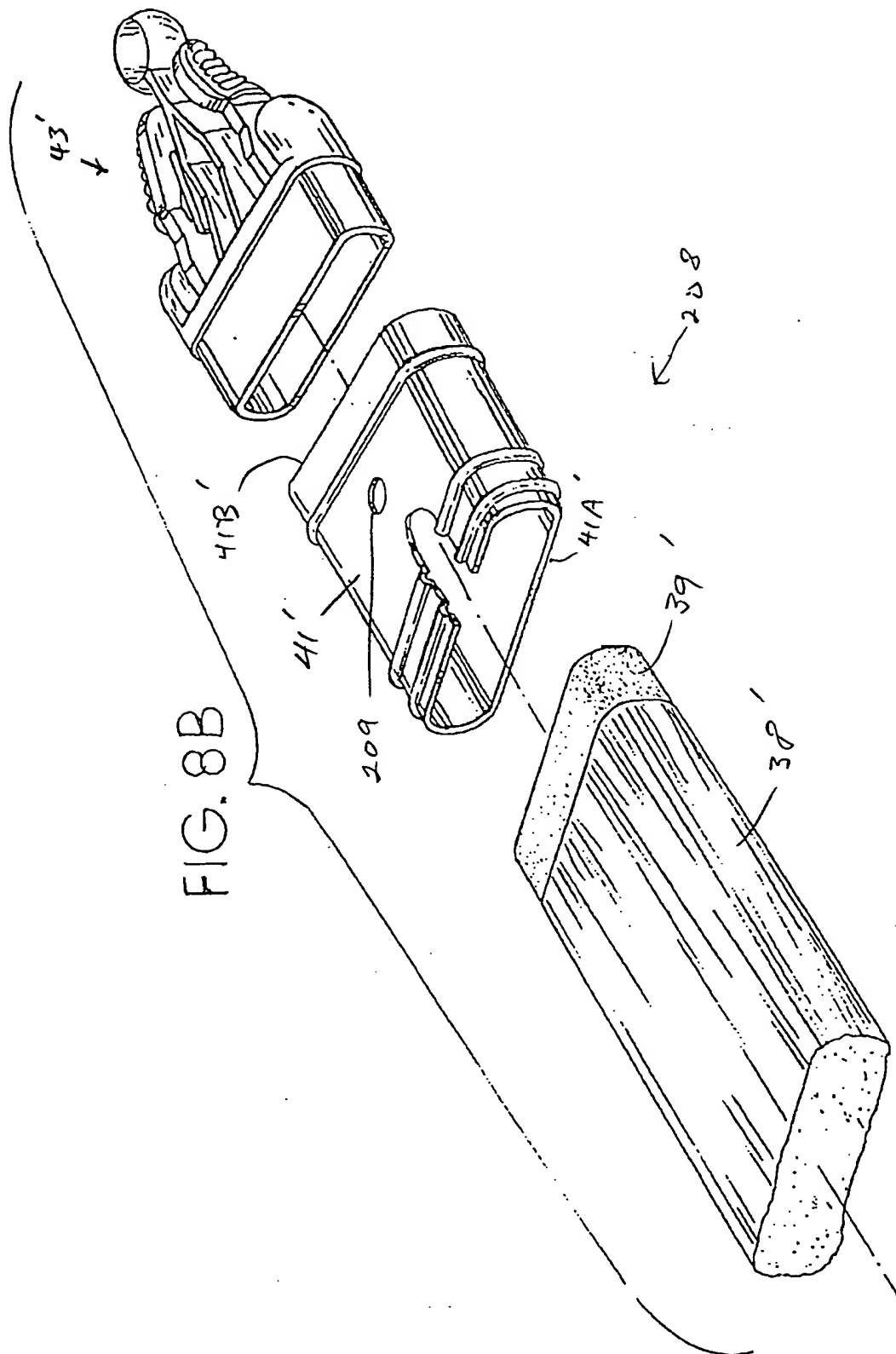


FIG. 8B

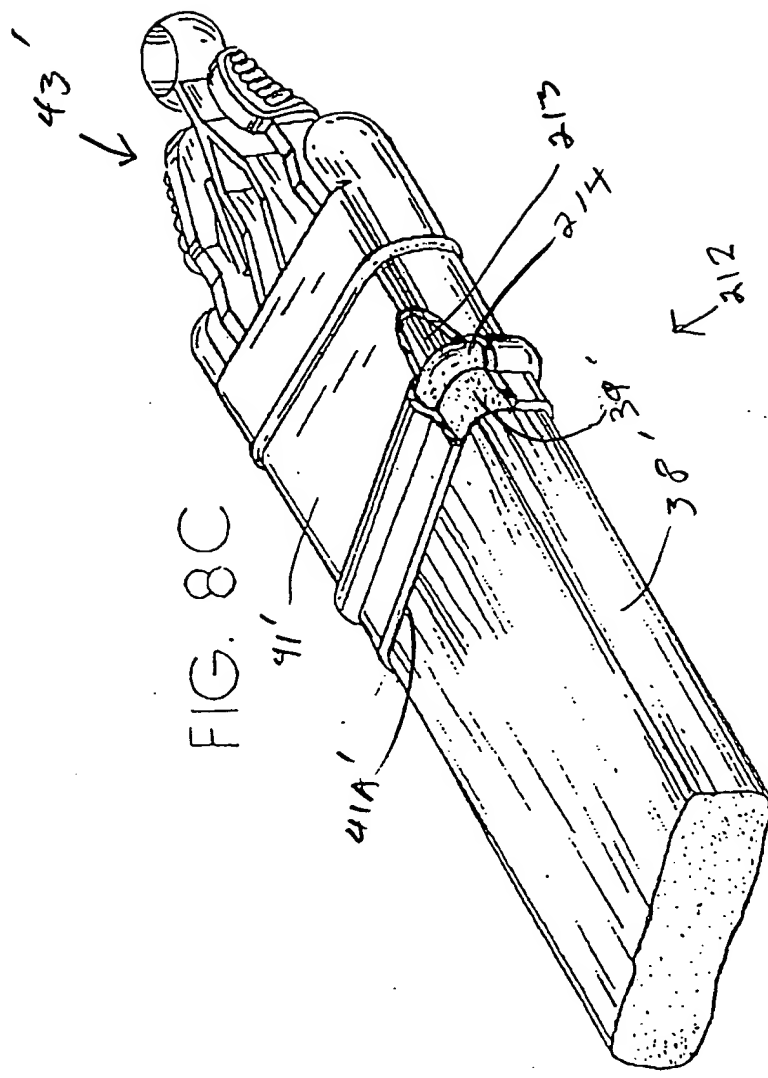


FIG. 8C

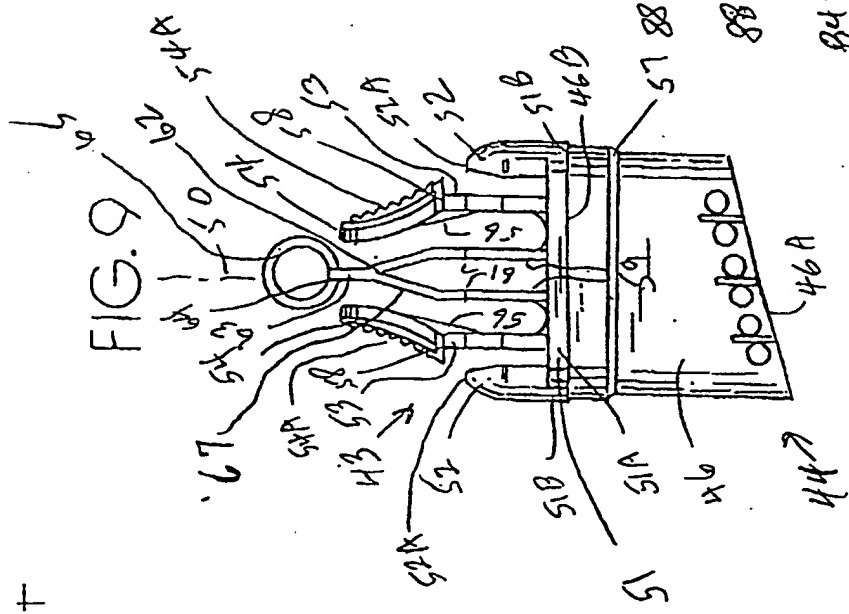


FIG. 9

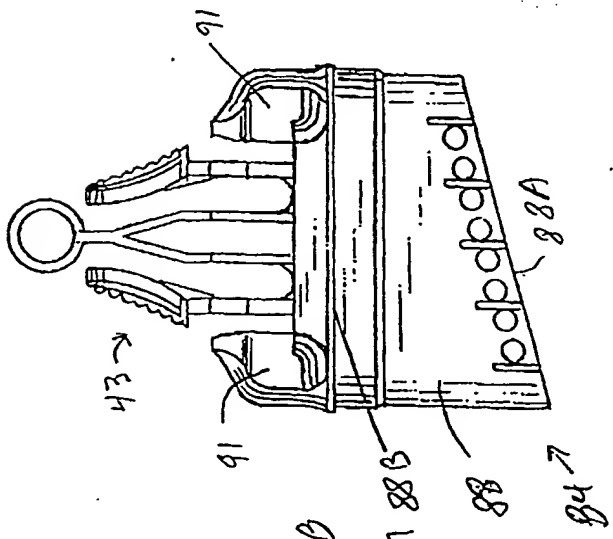


FIG. 10

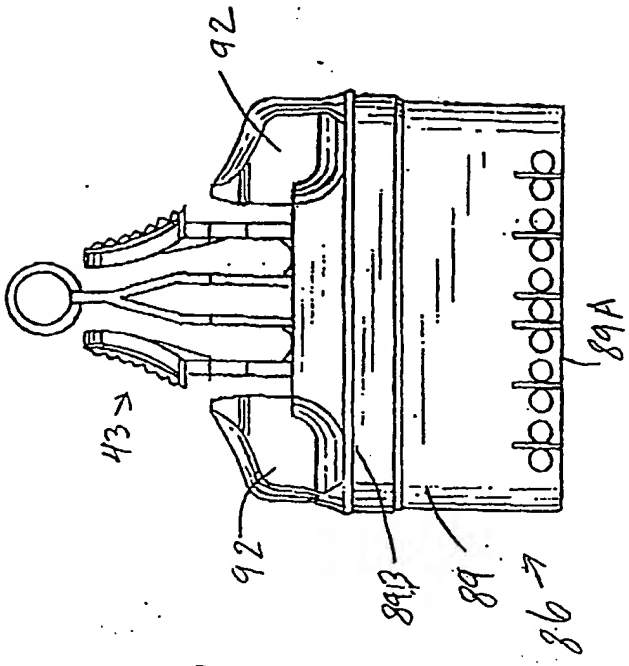


FIG. 11

FIG. 12

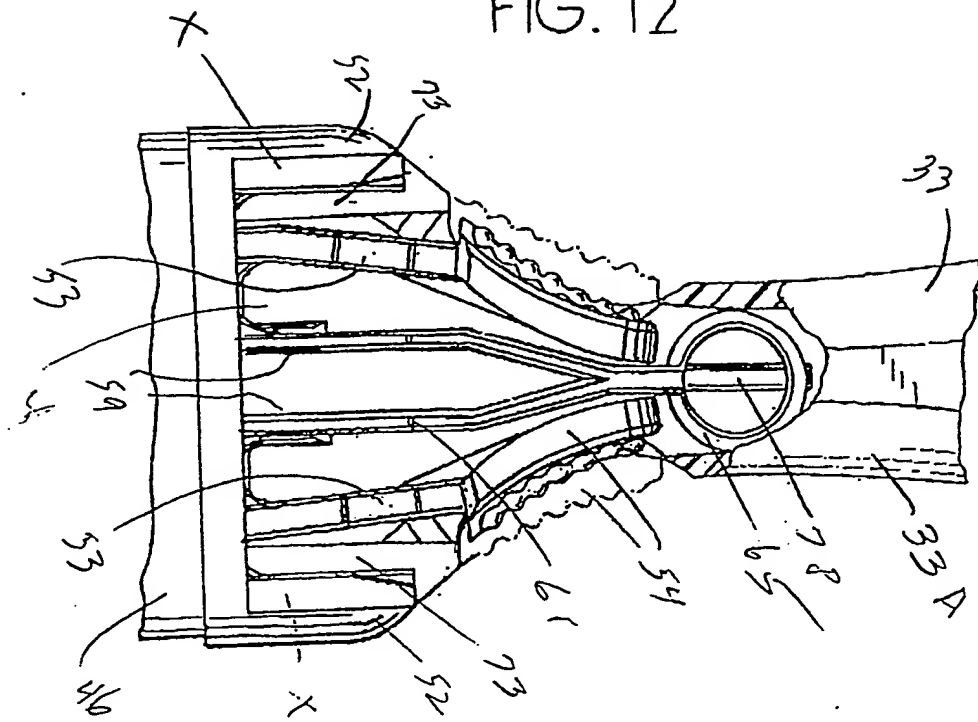


FIG. 13

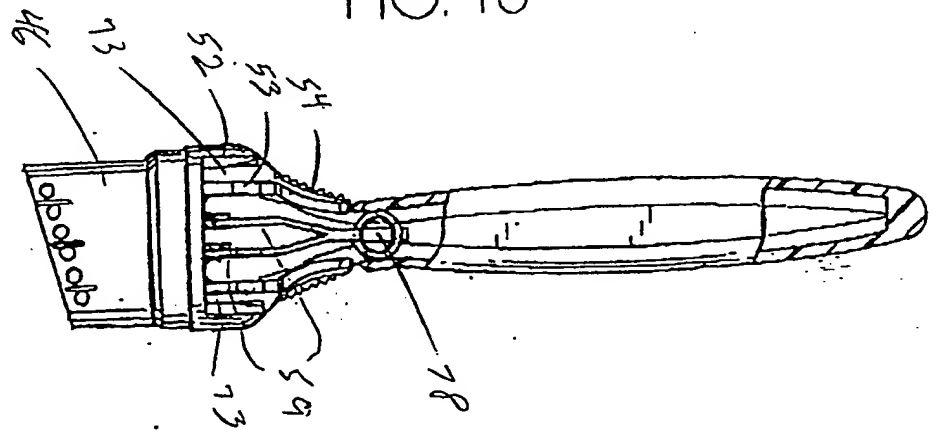


FIG. 14

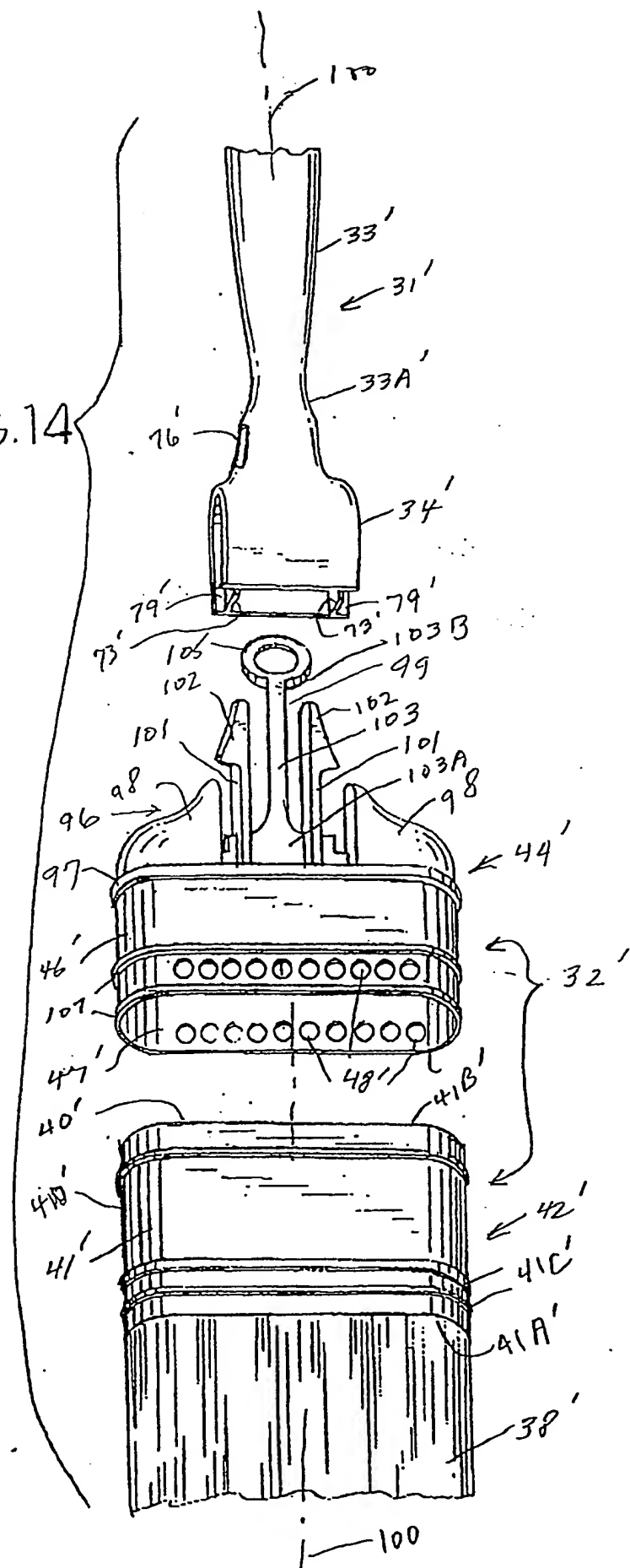


FIG. 15

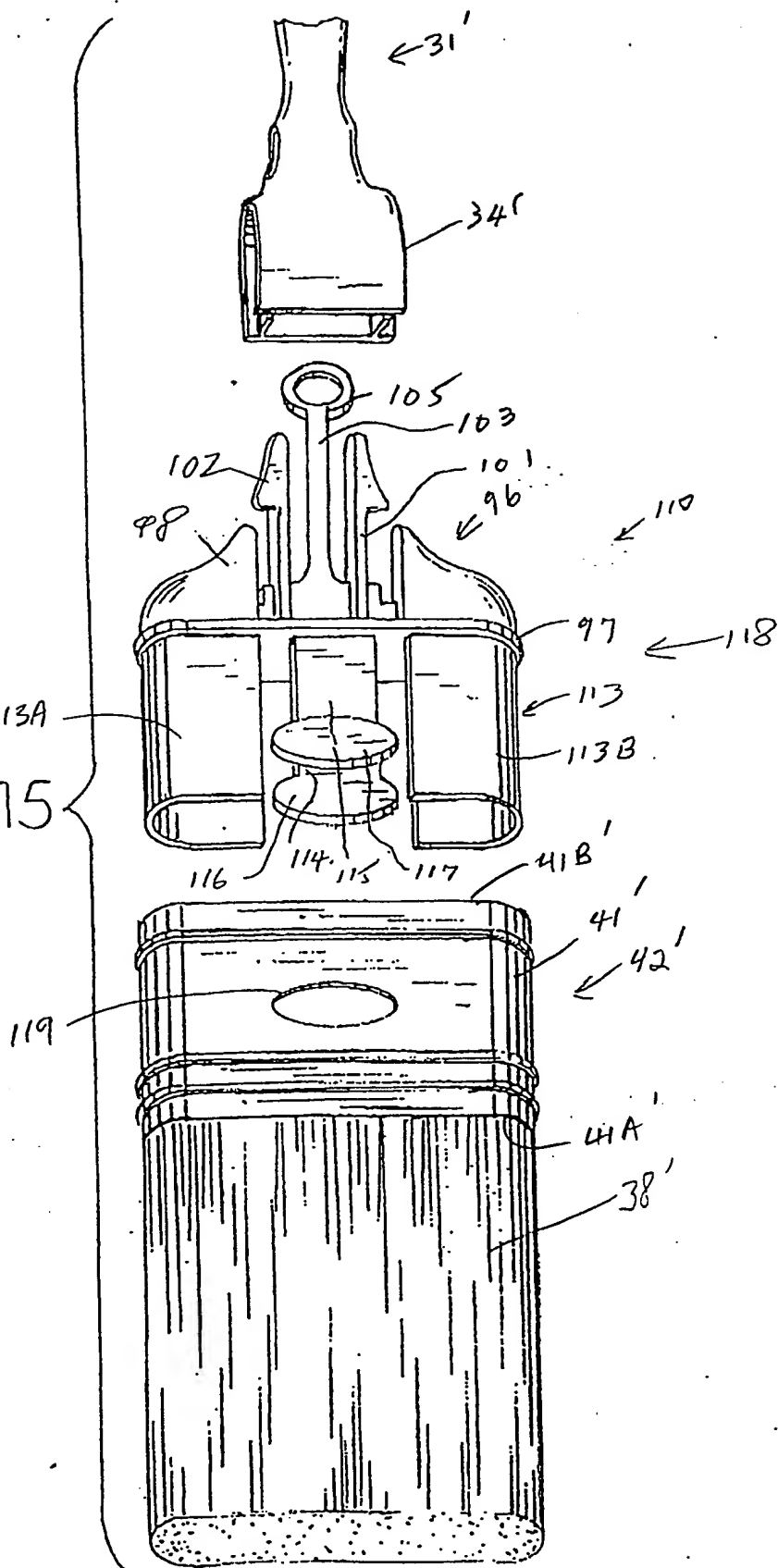
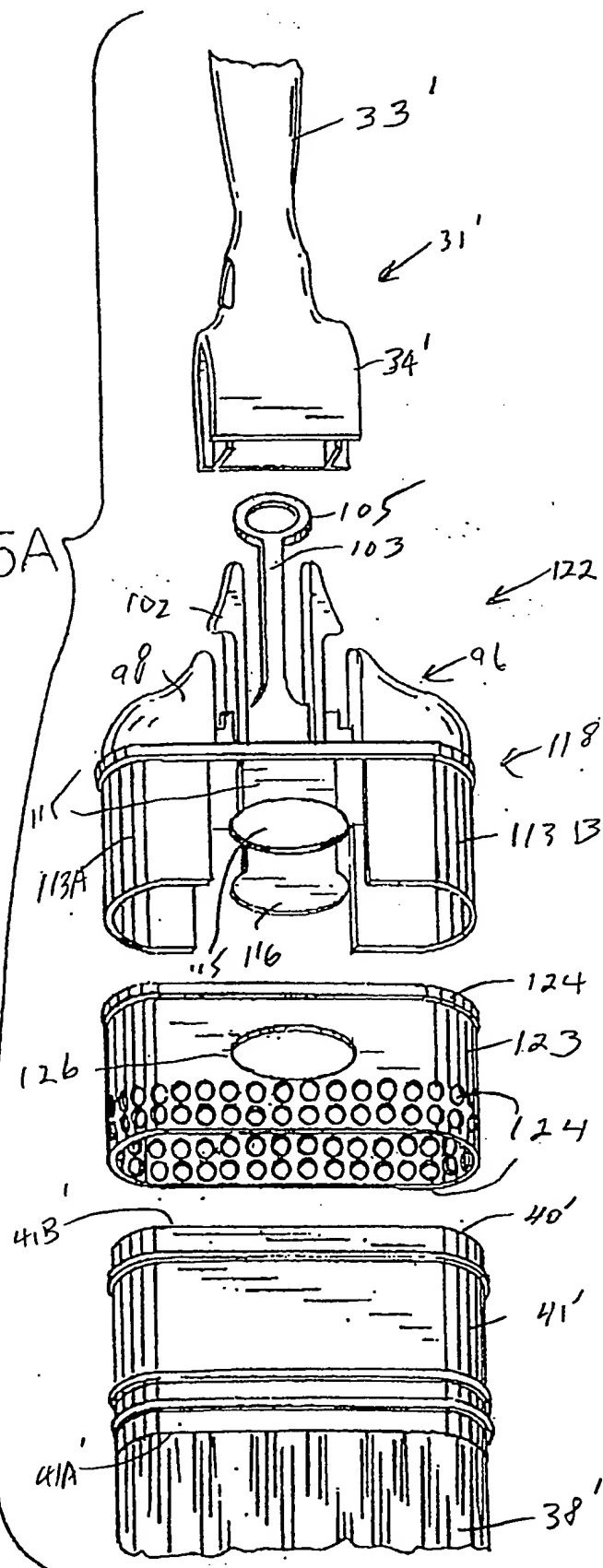


FIG. 15A



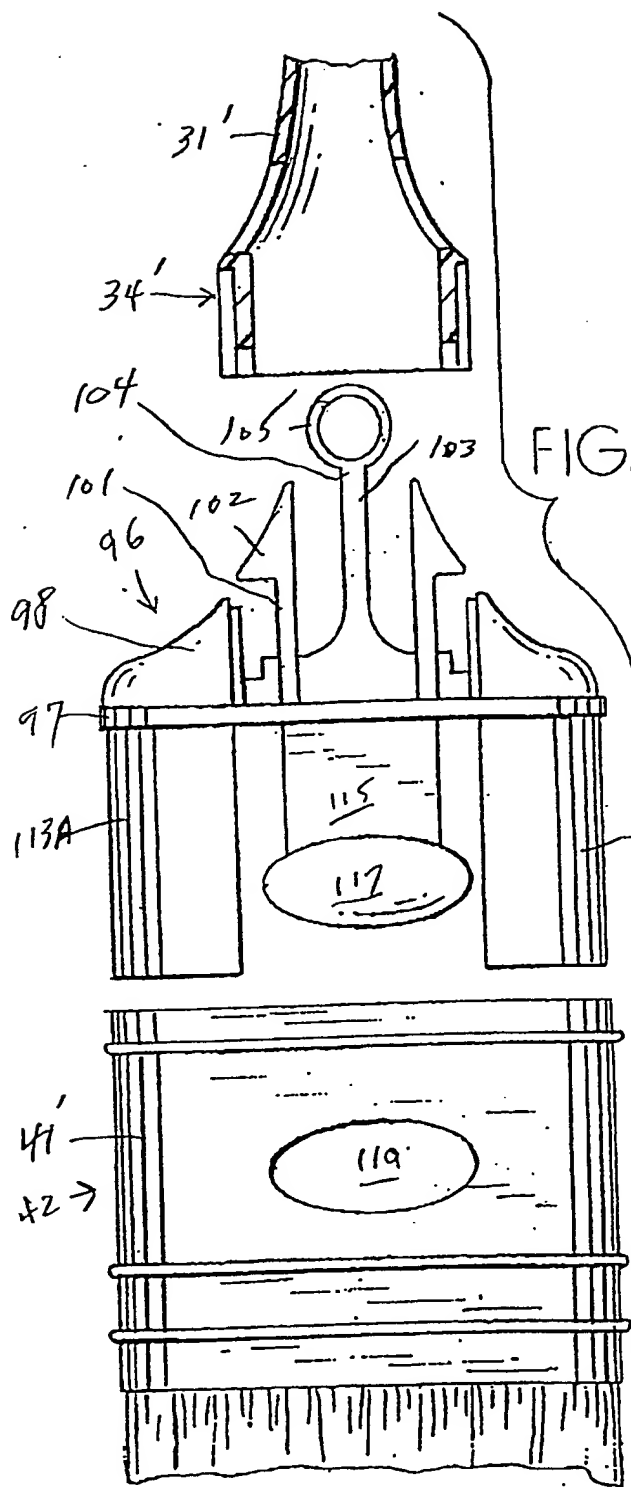


FIG. 16

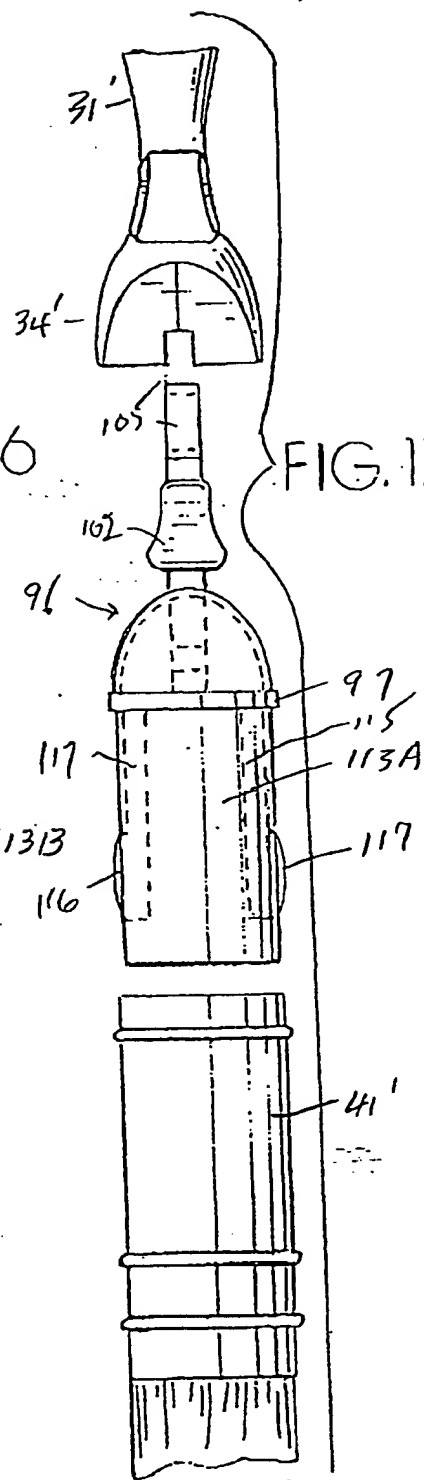


FIG. 17

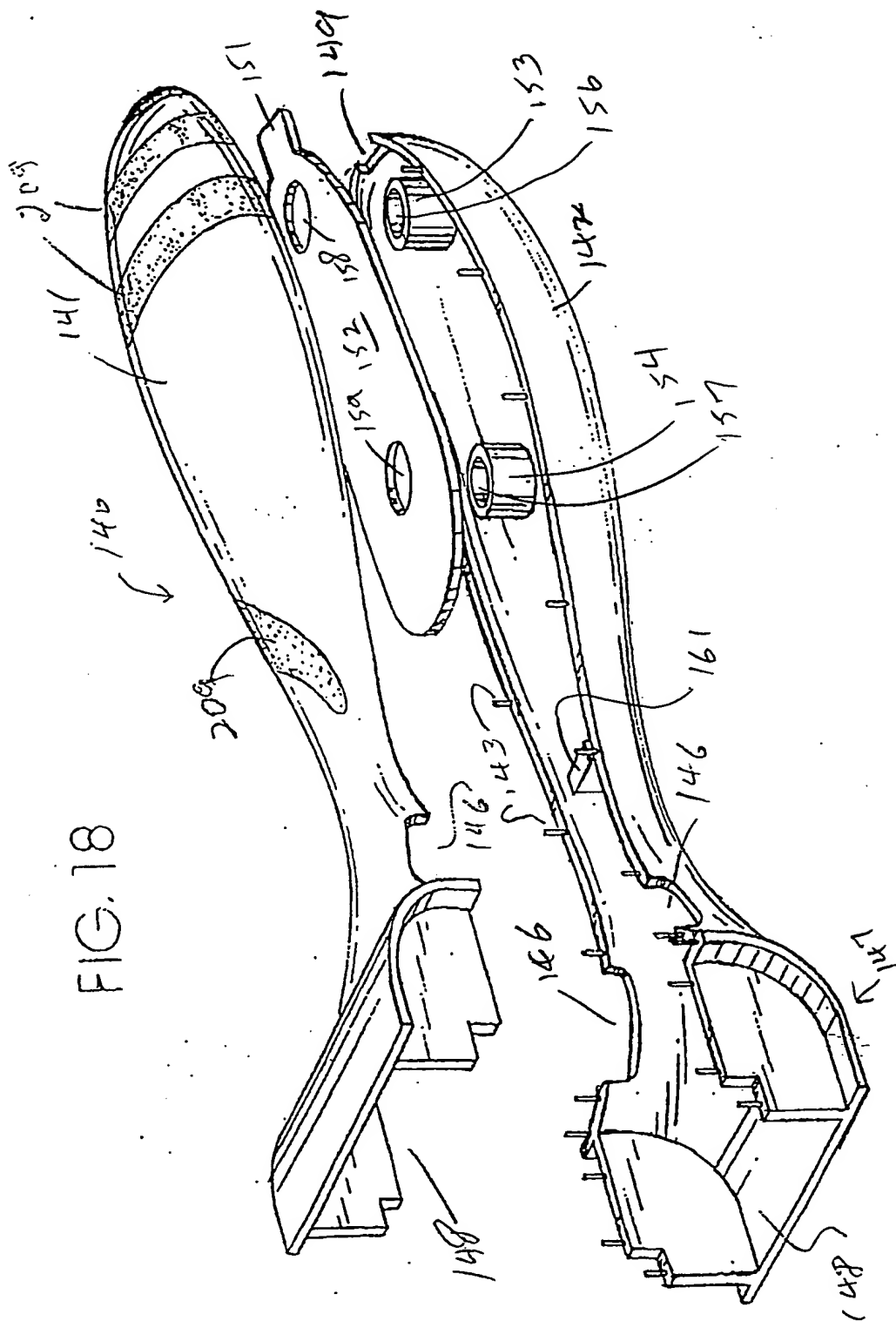


FIG. 19

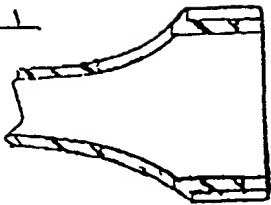


FIG. 23

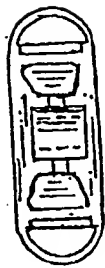


FIG. 20B

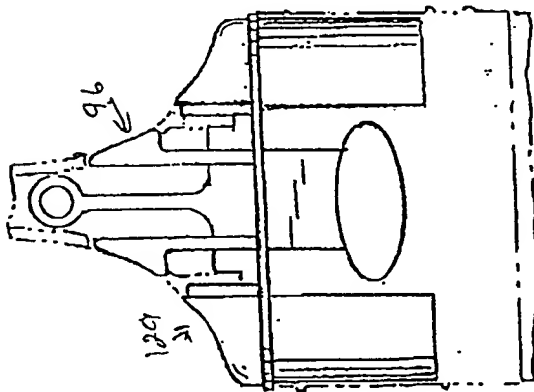


FIG. 20C

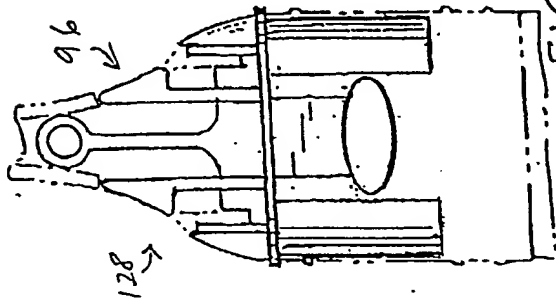


FIG. 22

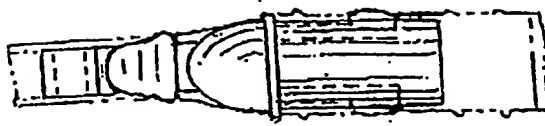


FIG. 20A

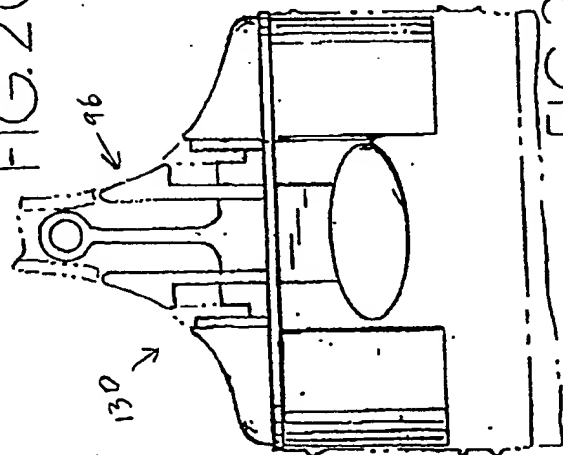


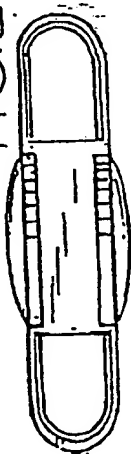
FIG. 21B



FIG. 21C



FIG. 21A



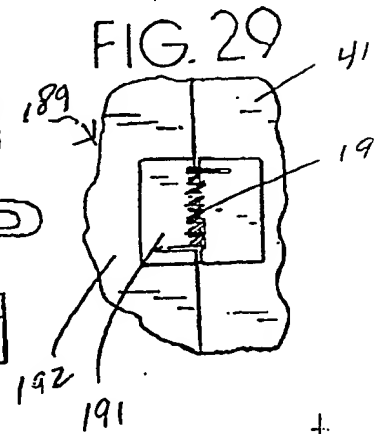
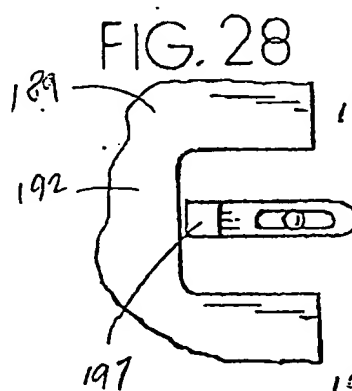
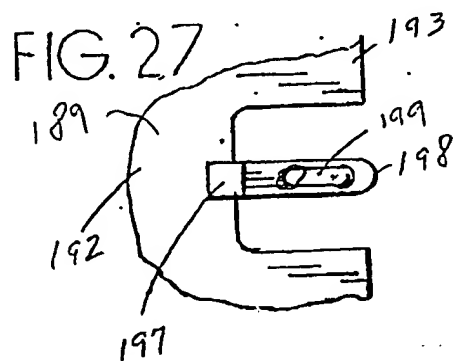
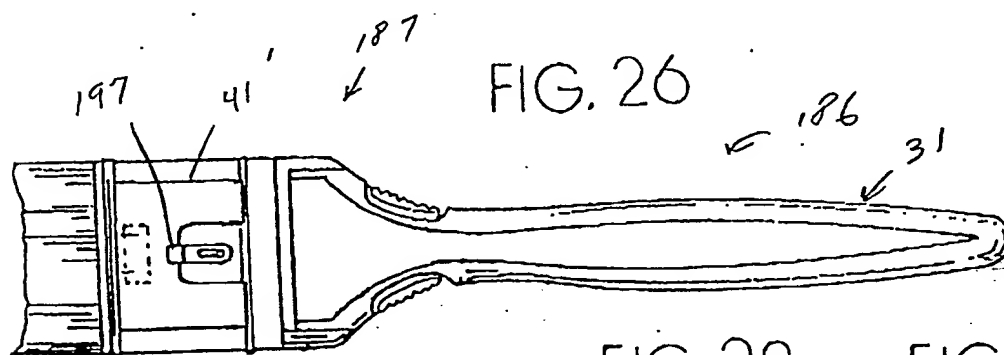
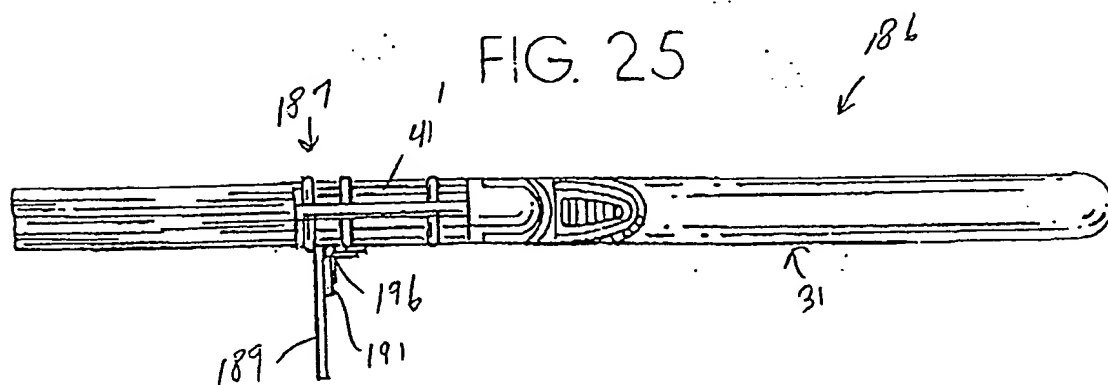
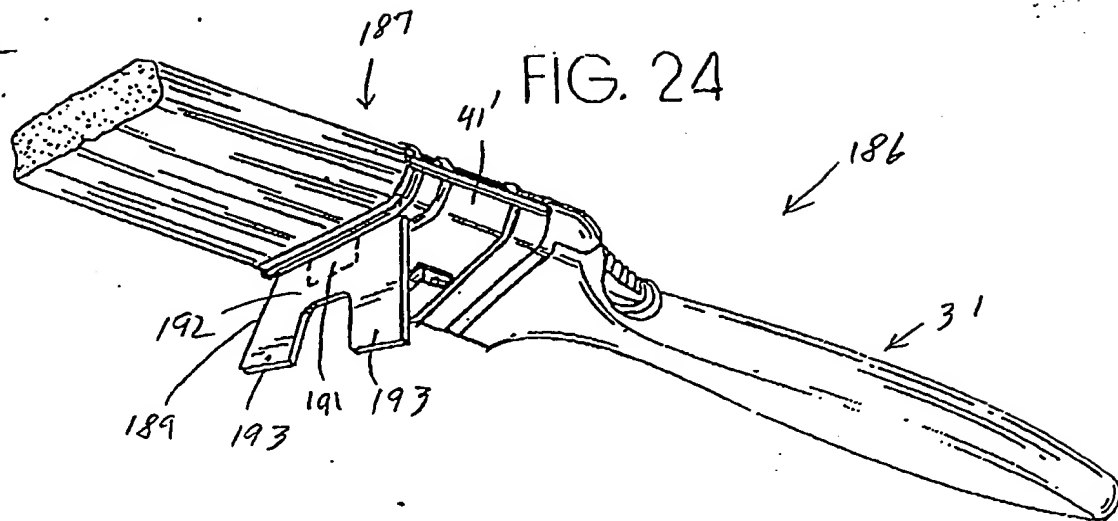


FIG. 30

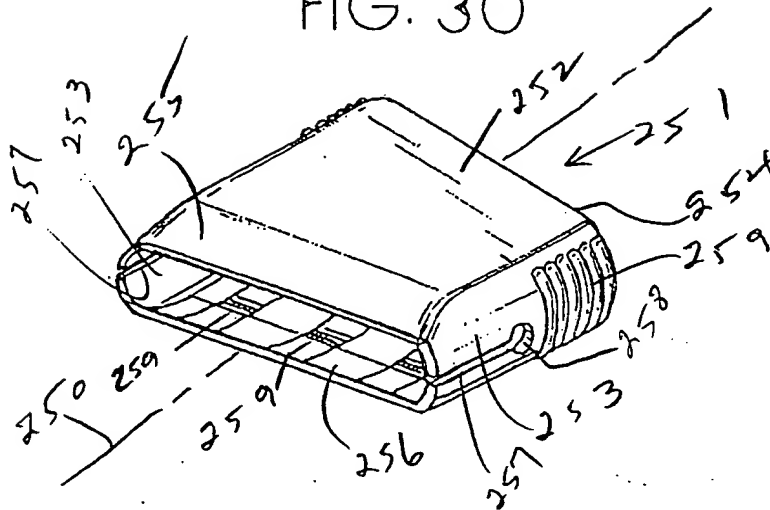


FIG. 31

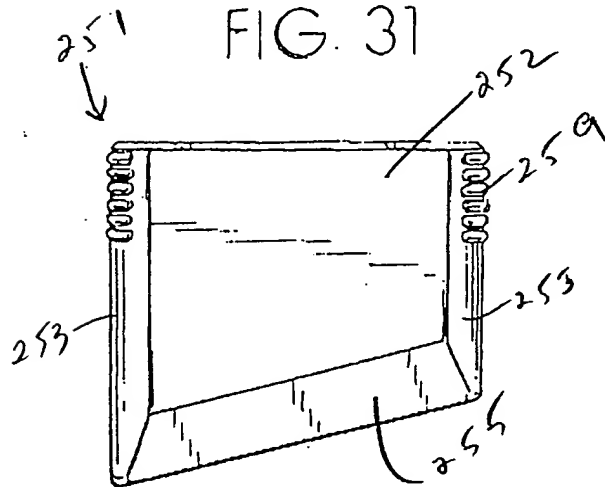


FIG. 32

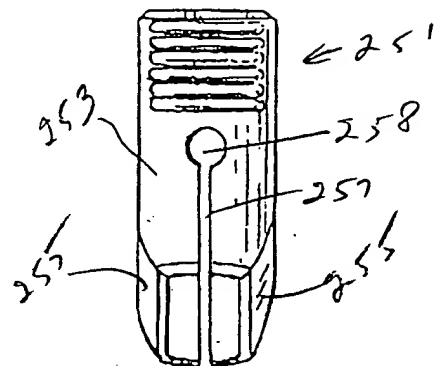


FIG. 36

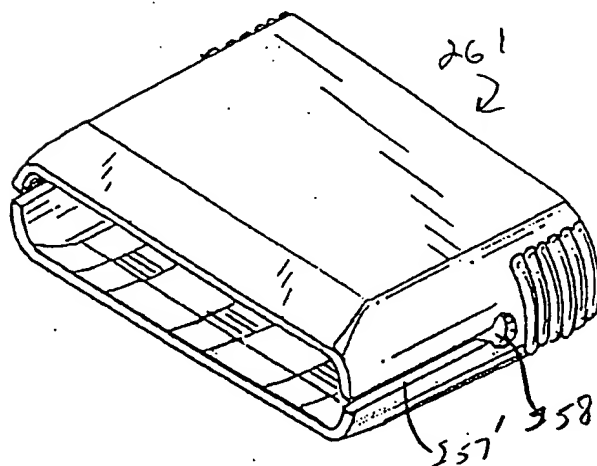
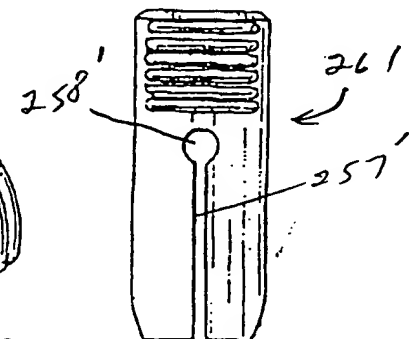


FIG. 37



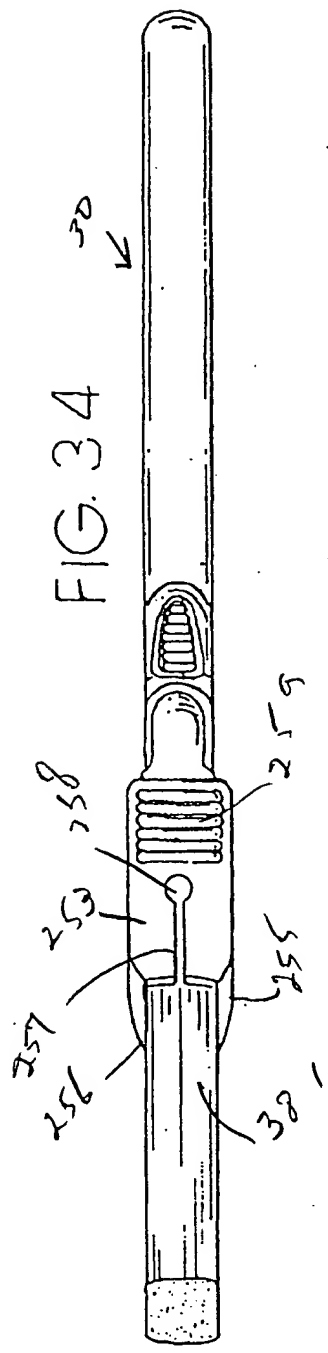


FIG. 34

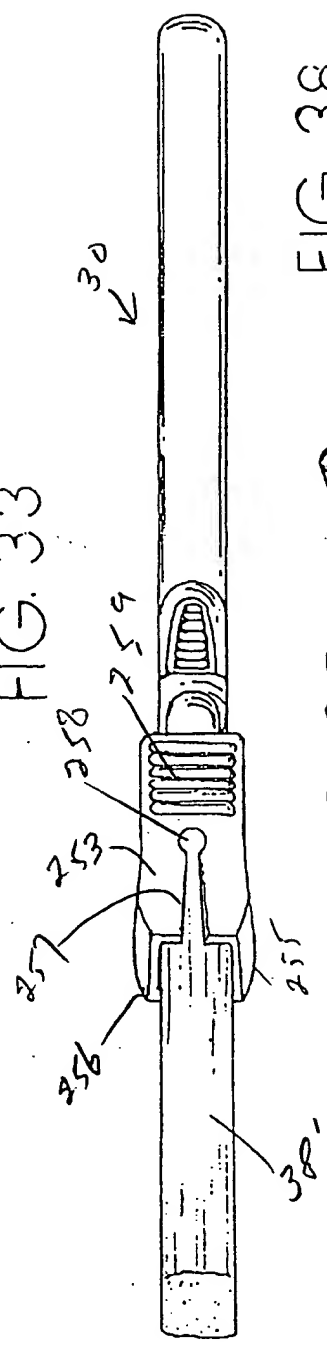


FIG. 33

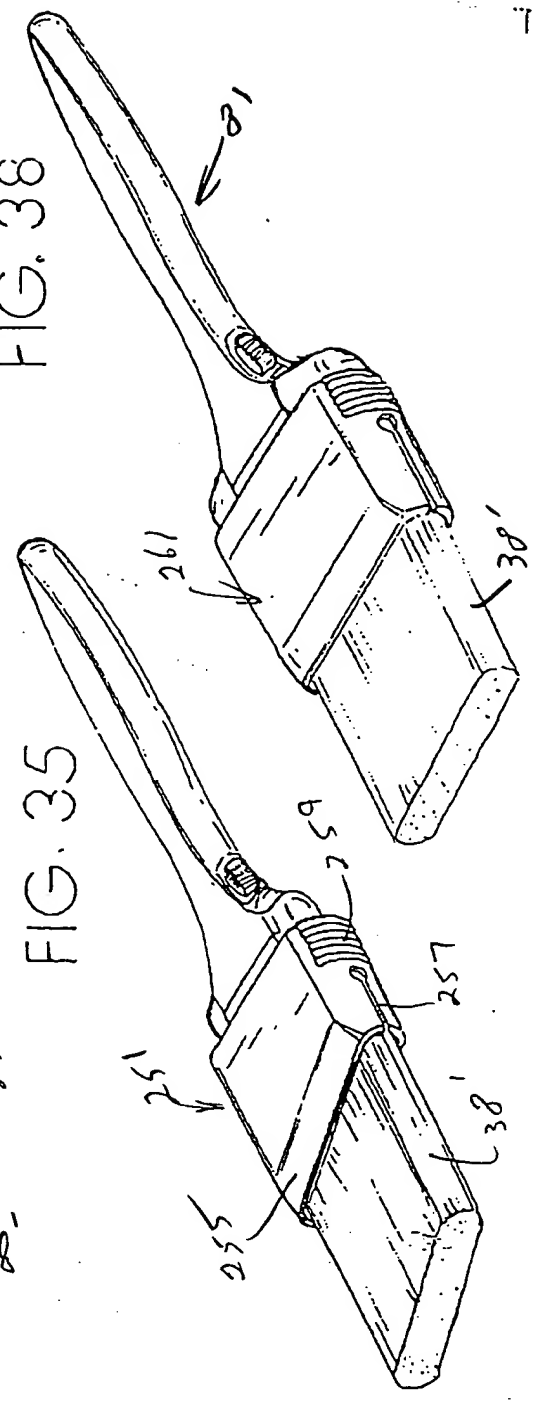


FIG. 35

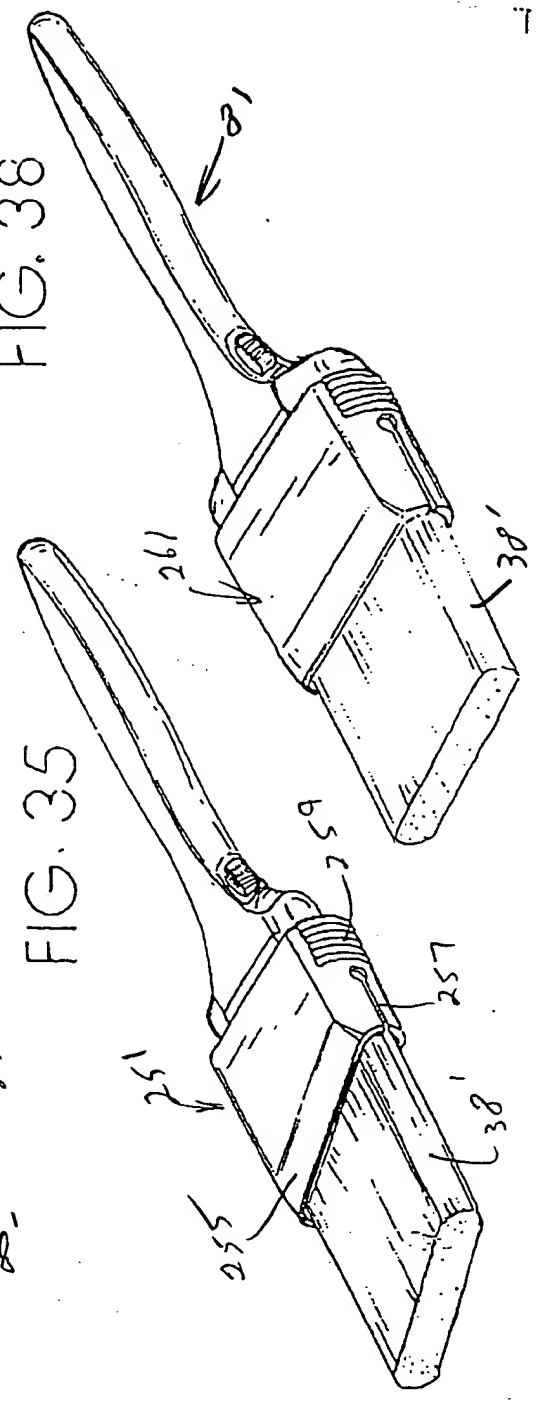


FIG. 38

FIG. 39

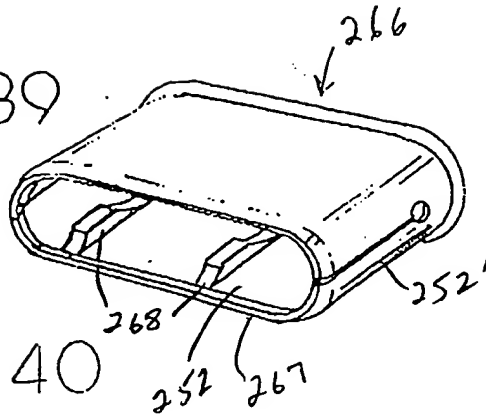


FIG. 40

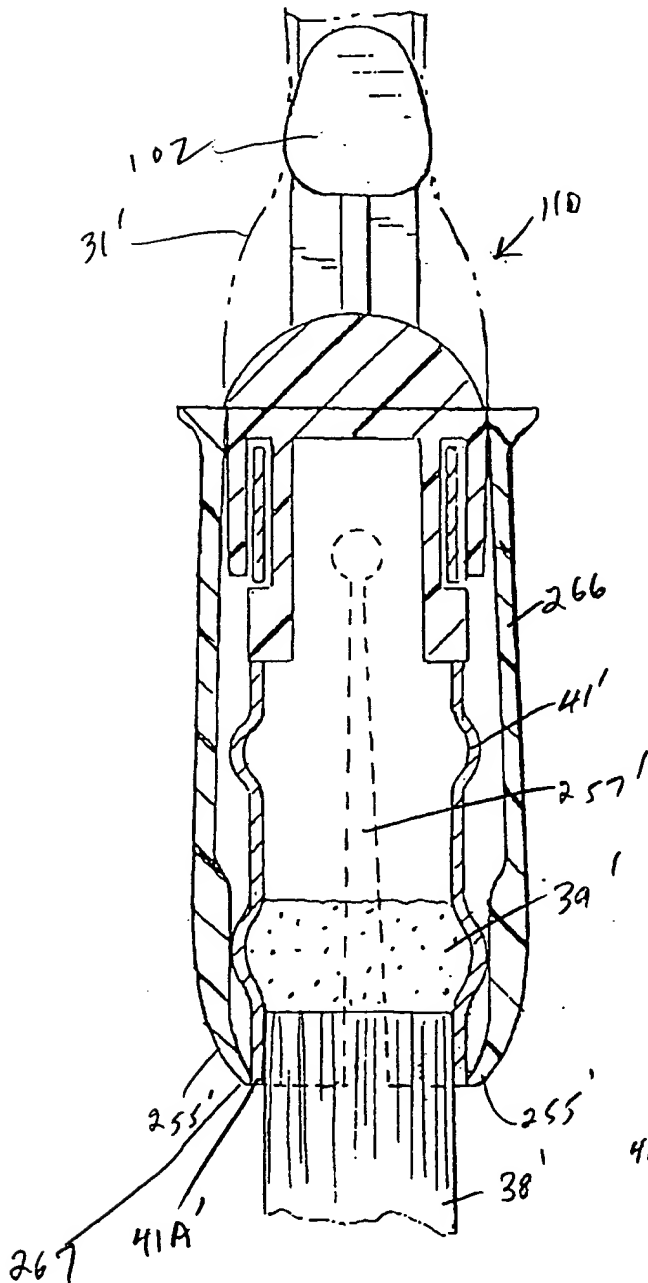
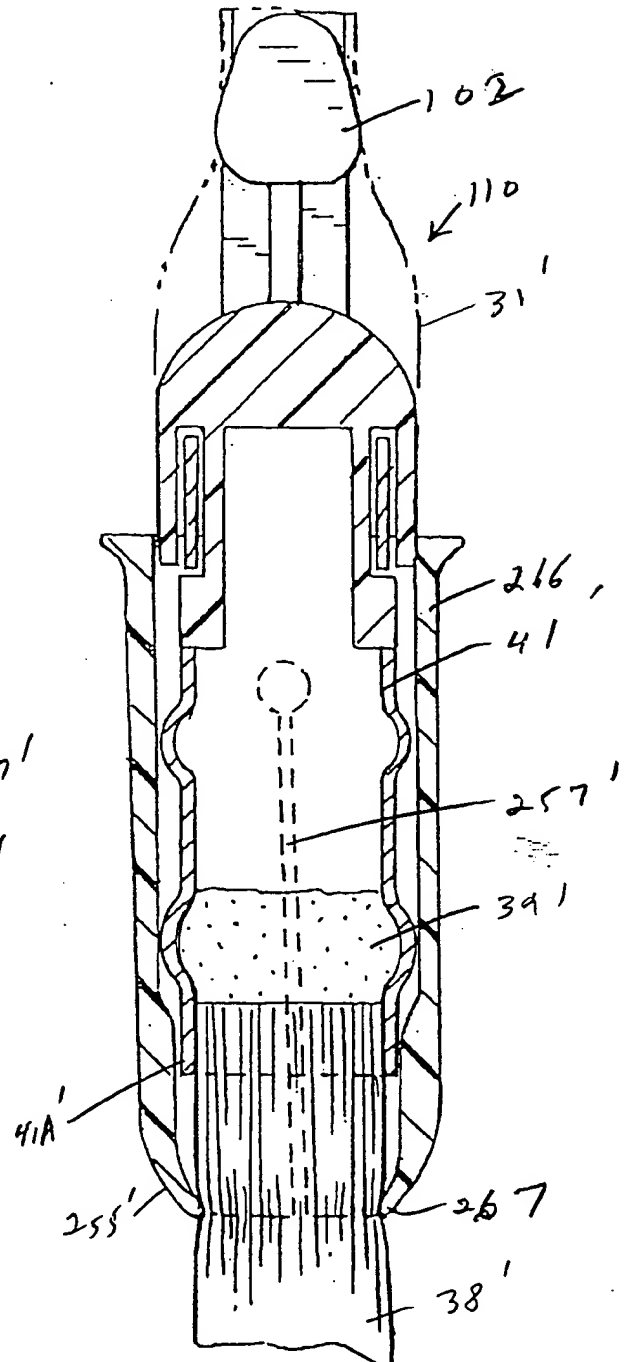


FIG. 41



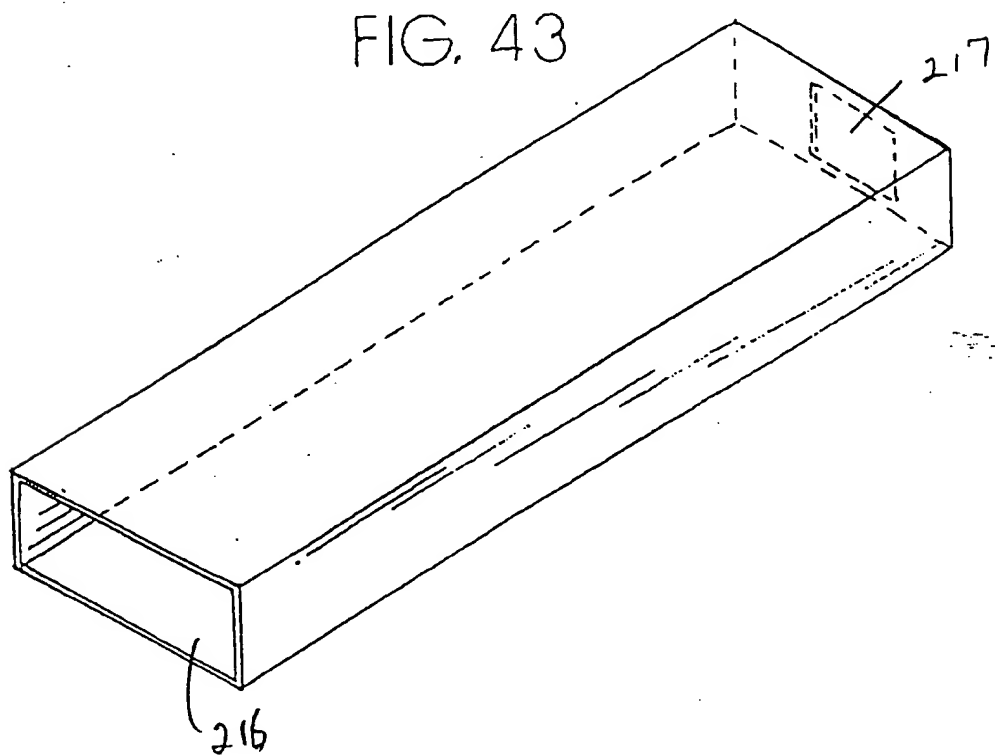
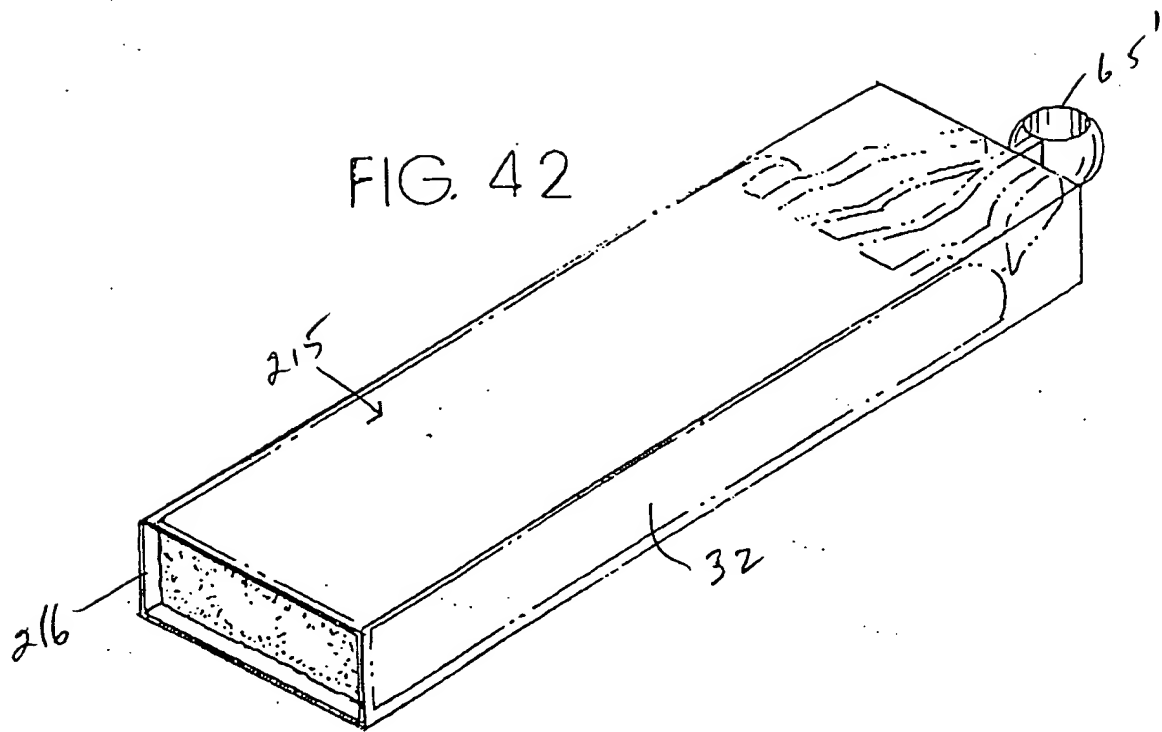


FIG. 44

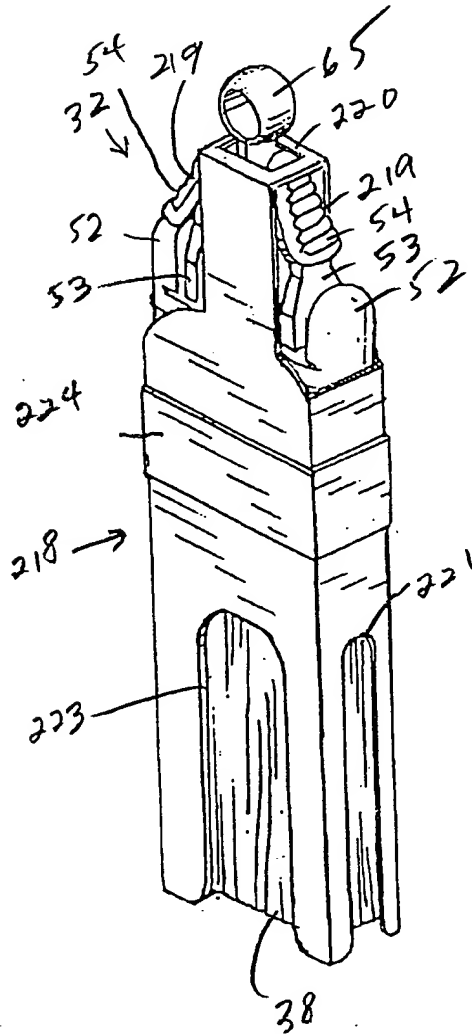


FIG. 46

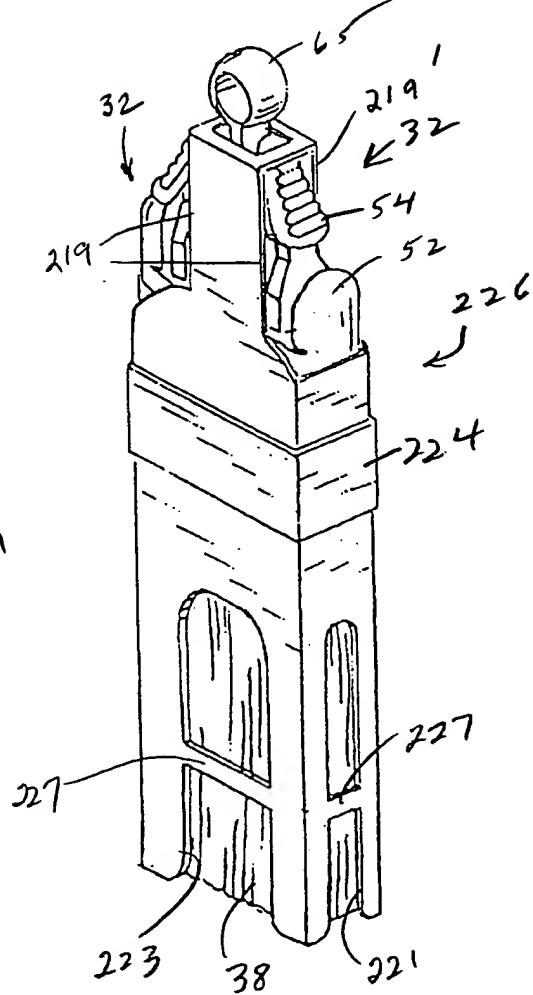


FIG. 45

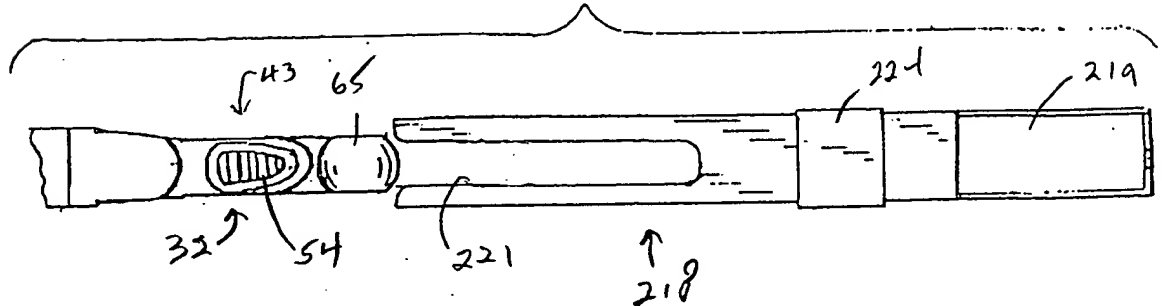


FIG. 47

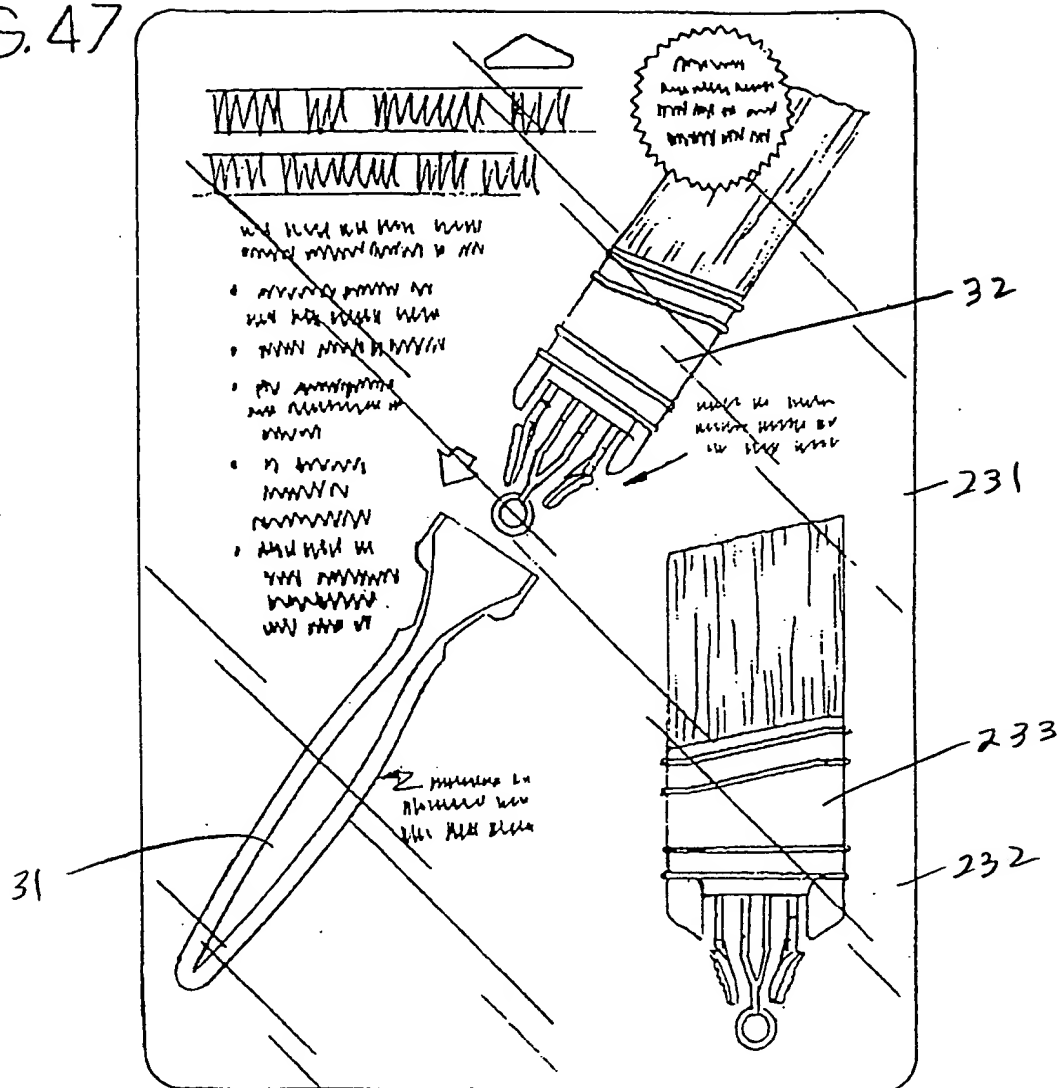


FIG. 48

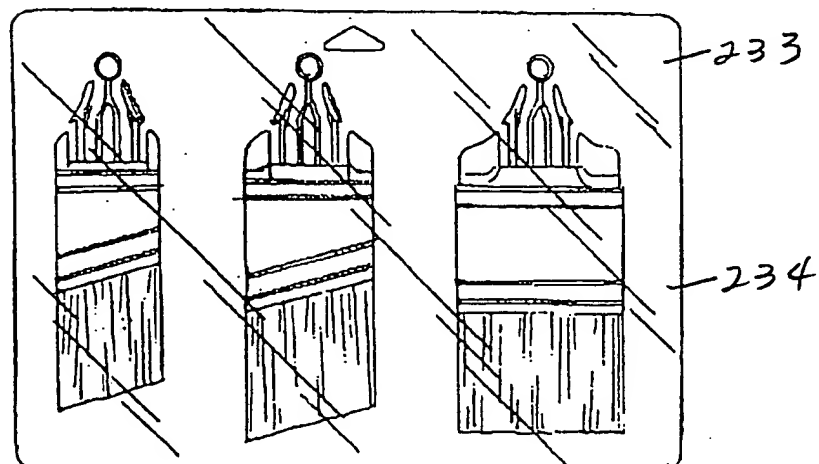


FIG. 49

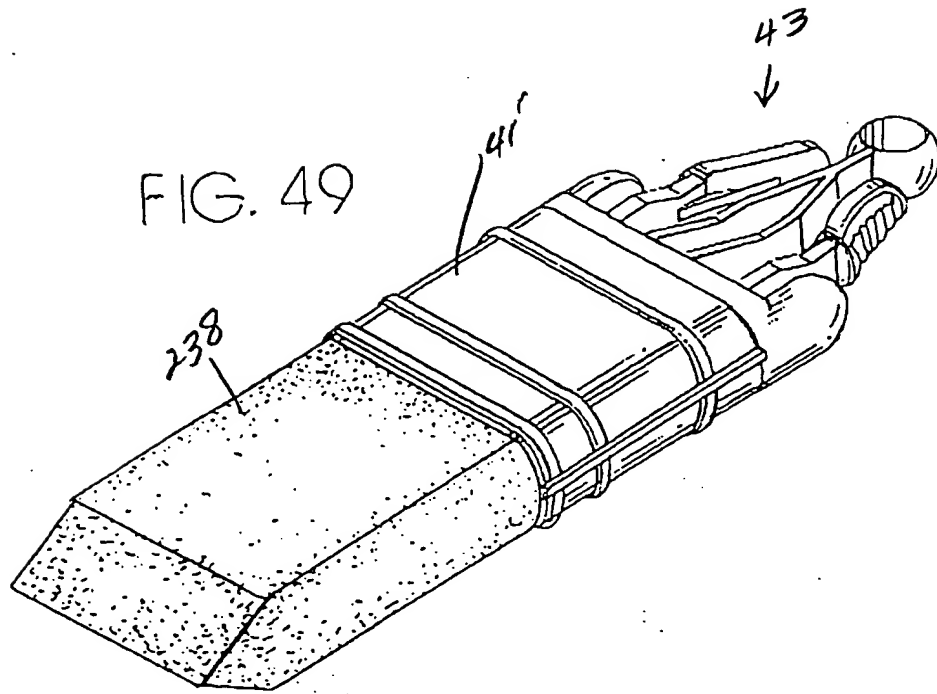


FIG. 50

